

**Tribhuvan University**

**Exploration of Cultural Conflict and Equilibrium in Chetan Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage***

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**By**

**Sudip Mandal**

**Symbol No: 280879**

**T.U. Regd. No.: 6-2-463-08-2011**

**Central Department of English**

**Kirtipur, Kathmandu**

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## Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled "Exploration of Cultural Conflict and Equilibrium in Chetan Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*" Submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Sudip Mandal has been approved by the undersigned member of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

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Mr. Maheshwor Poudel

Internal Examiner

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Dr. Anju Gupta

External Examiner

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Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota

Head

Central Department of English

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Abstract

*This paper entitled Exploration of Cultural Conflict and Equilibrium in Chetan Bhagat's Two States: The Story of My Marriage tags and dissects the forces of culture, conflict, cultural diversity, relativism, sociocultural traditions, tolerance, multiculturalism, intercultural marriage and equilibrium in the protagonists named Krish, Ananya and other characters. The study enthralls around the multiculturalism such as sociocultural practices, unity, cultural diversity, amalgamation and national unity of this contemporary time and all these all Bhagat testifies in his novel. This research also inspects confusion between traditional culture and modern culture colliding in the critique of protagonists' circumferences and other events inside the novel observing the father son relationship, struggle and freedom. This research assumes theoretical insights associated with multiculturalism and cultural conflict elaborated by Bhikhu Parekh, Patrick West, Jonathan H. Turner and Alexander Grewe. This research sums up that Bhagat's novel uncovers the trends and characteristics of life living culture of the young generation, sociocultural values and cultural relativism in different situations emerging in modern times.*

Keywords: culture, multiculturalism, diversity, conflict, amalgamation, cultural relativism and equilibrium

This research analyses Chetan Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*, through the lens of multiculturalism discussed by Bhikhu Parekh, Patrick West and Robert Longely. It also examines Bhagat's application of characters, setting, language and plot on the basis of traditionalist and modernist clash. This study navigates culture, cultural conflict, ethnicity, psychological background of protagonists and their level of cultural equilibrium and forth comparatively. The argument in-between construction of multiculturalism brings forth altercation among characters and the contemporary encircling of the novel. Every action seems not compromising with modern and traditional forms which brings the conflict in the novel. Bhagat's preamble with his story beholds the skeleton and formation of both cultural conflict and equilibrium symbols through secular point, the researcher asserts that the changing socio-cultural norms and values of contemporary India reflect the cultural conflict and equilibrium.

*Two States: The Story of My Marriage* deals with the clashes among distinct cultural values because of the traditional cultural restrictions. In the novel, Krish and Ananya are supposed to go away from inherited cultural tradition. Cultural inheritance does not permit to be openly free because culture acquires ethical line. It sketches various cultural traits which are looked at in association with the trend of modern culture. It portrays the modern generation who seek freedom in diverse societies. It reflects a kind of cultural conflict along with, conflict with the process of substitution and acquisition of other's culture. The researcher analyzes the effect of multiculturalism that fascinates people to adjust in cultural diversity. Those people who are living in a multicultural society want to live in an open community where they can enjoy the rites of different cultures. The open society is where they inhabit

joyfully and can make choices. In this sense, multiculturalism is supported as adopting and amalgamating distinct cultures, which posits cultural conflict.

The story of the novel variously portrays North Indian culture and South Indian culture. The novel bestows mainly two representative protagonists who are from two different states of India and want to get married against their religious as well as cultural values unacceptable to justified social norms and values in India. Bhagat talks about Indian culture. The story depicts two places and two cultures. It discusses cultural differences which do not permit association. The two families have their own distinct culture and various socio-cultural values which they inherit. Both protagonists Krish and Ananya render two different states of India, North and South and both want to marry despite their religious and cultural differences.

Culture has a deep and inseparable association with human beings who contrives their own culture in the long run. Every culture has its own norms and values. India has many castes and breeds and each has its own culture. They are delineated according to their isolated culture. The society on the basis of caste has several distinct caste values. Each ethnic has their norms and values so people strictly follow their own cultural values. So, Bhagat has emphasized caste-based culture and Indians have been practicing since its beginning. But it remains the reason for conflict. Currently, it is controversial topic in Indian society. There is cultural distinction between two states, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. People of Tamil Nadu are very conservative, conscious and strict towards their sociocultural rituals and according to their cultures, they are valued. On the contrary, modern people are melting toward the multicultural essence and values of this society. The multiculturalism protects their freedom as they desire but conservative cultural value are unable to be free from down-trodden beliefs. In fact, people in multicultural

society have conflict or disputes with such cultural restrictions. Bhagat writes novels based on his personal experiences with romance, sentiment, religious faith, relationship, culture, diversity, conflict, secularism, economic and family relationship which tend to analyze the message portrayed in his novels, truly visualizing the essence of Indian culture.

The primary text of this dissertation, *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* is a romantic love story about two central characters, Krish and Ananya, who are the representatives from two different states of India, the North Indian and South Indian families. Krish is a Punjabi boy from Delhi, whereas Ananya is a smart Tamil girl from Chennai. They meet in IIMA in Ahamdabad and fall in love although they feature from distinct socio-cultural values, religion, economy and location. Both protagonists suffer from various obstacles in society because of their cultural differences. They fall deeply in love and attempt to transform their love story into marriage and induce to impress their parents. The problem is that they inherit distinct cultural beliefs. Krish and Ananya want to marry despite their cultural differences that prevent them from being a married couple. They are ready to assimilate in their companionship but their cultural allegiance holds back them to marry. Therefore, to convert their love story into a love marriage, the couple has a tough battle ahead of them against established culture, for it is easy to fight and rebel but much harder to convince. Thus, Krish and Ananya come into communion with new alliance therefore they deflect their unaltered culture due to the effect of multiculturalism.

Ananya belongs to a Brahmin clan so she seems to be confined to that culture. Despite being a Brahmin character, she challenges orthodox practices and therehas to witness many social hurdles. By birth, she has been totally embedded in sociocultural norms and values, but as an adult,has to adjust with multicultural norms and values.

Falling in love with Krish she runs across various objections in the society. In the Indian community, Brahmins tend to follow rigid rules and regulations. Every caste or family has established rituals so all the family members are supposed to follow their principles. Ananya is from a Brahmin family therefore she should abide by all sociocultural beliefs. Furthermore, being a Brahmin daughter, she has to stand many familial prohibitions. Yet, she revolts against all traditional faiths and goes against her parents' beliefs.

Ananya is unconventional and she has domain of multicultural values. She disbelieves such orthodox culture and getstouch with new surroundings. She ripens into new community therefore she has no such familial concept and faiths. So, she desires to assimilate with a new cultural environment. As Ananya deeply falls in love with a Punjabi boy Krish, cultural conflict takes place between the two states. Her life is entirely affected by new cultural values. The concept of cultural conflict and multiculturalism is discussed by the author in the novel.

As we discuss the issues of literature it has large view through many angles and perspectives along with ongoing transformation of the world. The story centers around the different cities of India: Ahmedabad, Delhi, Chennai and Goa. So, the fiction initiates at Ahmedabad and ends in Delhi or Chennai which reflects the time of new search, looking for opportunity and in other language it is the transformation of dynamic society. The first part of the novel visualizes the youth, love and beginning of a new generation who struggles to get married with a girl from another caste or culture. On the other hand, when the story shifts towards other cities, there are class conflicts, alienation, modern dilemma and equilibrium occurring in the story. The idea of modern culture applied to the behavior of Krish, "I knelt down next to her, my mouth close to her ear. ' Sorry, how is it going?' I whispered. Ananya Swaminathan,



I, Krish Malhotra, am deeply in love with you and want to be with you always. Apart from when we go to the office, of course. Will you marry me?" (38). Another fact about Ananya, "She tightens her lips to hide a laugh. 'Yes, you idiot. I will be with you'" (39). Ananya's response to Krish's proposal challenges the traditional culture and leads to the clash between two diverse cultures. In the same way, Krish's relation to Ananya in Ahmedabad and rest of the characters Kavita, Radha as well as Mr. Swaminathan, places and events informs the impact of conflict, struggle, dilemma and contradiction which are the byproducts of multiculturalism.

Regarding cultural modernization or reflection of youth culture, many proponents and critics have pointed out the same issue in *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*. Talking about Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*, the novel has presented a huge incentive to the popular romantic novel. It renders the audiences around the cosmopolitan centers, Ahmedabad, Delhi, and Chennai, the stations of career-dreaming youths. It is a story of inter-state marriage between a Punjabi boy and Tamil Brahmin girl. Bhagat has tested the conventional notion of campus novel in *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*. Adam Begley opines;

One every campus in every decade, there's the urgent need for new funds, issues of academic freedom, worries about tiring and admissions quotas, petty jealousies, endless inter and intra-departmental squabbles. Descriptions of scholarly temperature are amusingly constant. It seems they have been stamping out social scientists with the same cookie cutter for half a century.

Ditto for English professors. The students are elemented, as unvarying as earth and fire. (40)

To support Begley's argument, the introduction of Ananya by Krish Malhotra on the beginning page emplaces campus culture, "Girls like Ananya, if and when they arrive

by freak chance, become instant pin-ups in our testosterone-charged, estrogen-starved campus” (3). So, Begley has experimented the characteristics of campus novel in Bhagat’s novel.

In the same way, Aurora Nihit reviews Chetan Bhagat’s *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* from cultural perspective. He talks about the cultural collisions which catalyze embarrassment for national assimilation and younger generation of educated India that attempts to move against the cultural barriers which cluster people and keep them apart in the chief thematic preoccupation. Nihit tries to show how a culture and family hold people within certain established values. He argues on cultural situation of Indian families.

Such a situation common in the country especially if the families are from two different cultures as it happened in his case and they need to come on a common ground in various cultural, personal as well as family matters before discussions about wedding can proceed further. Situations are often very excruciating and a lot of friction can happen if matters are not handled with a delicate hand. (2)

It is prior that literature is the stigma of society. Bhagat’s *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* is a chronicle of the intricacies and complications involved in inter-community and inter-state marriage. While talking about the cultural identity, Beena Agarwal in her book *Chetan Bhagat: A Voice of Seismic Shift in Indian English Fiction* reviews that cultural identity is complicated splendor and it consists of all possible mode of habit and experiences. She adds:

Chetan Bhagat in his representation of his thought of marriage detects the social issues like concept of dowry in traditional marriage and the references of matrimonial alliances in the developing form of conduct in multicultural

and multinational societies. Bhagat quotes an example, while mother is bent to impose Krish to organize a formal encounter with Pummuaunty's daughter, but Krish imparts a candid confession, "I allowed my mind to be trapped again by thoughts of my son, a South Indian girl" (60). ...Bhagat, through the distinctiveness of the attitude of Krish and his mother pinpoints out the cultural diversities in Punjabi and Tamil families. (97)

Moreover, Agarwal comments on the issue of inter-caste marriages in the context of the synthesis of culture and solidarity of nation. She opines:

The new intentions of social relationships need the reorientation of the social system to ensure a balanced mode of relations to resist the forces that are creeping fast in the era of 'globalization' and 'multicultural construct.' It ensures that Bhagat observes human conditions entirely and no longer celebrates the idealized image of life. He looks forward to cultural combination and harmonious survival of man beyond social prejudices. (111)

So, Agarwal mentions about the effect of globalization and how it deconstructs the cultural identity of an individual in Bhagat's novel. She concludes that in the age of globalization we cannot imagine a particular culture rather we should adopt and remain in diverse society.

Similarly, another critic has explained about Bhagat's novel and she has analyzed about the novel from a different perspective. She talks about this novel in this way. Aparna Tiwari dissects Chetan Bhagat's novel as, "Cultural change is the great sign for modernism and we witness that modern ways are being adopted very easily in all Bhagat's novels. Emerging trends, changing moral values, education, marriage and social life is looked upon with a modern perspective" (559). Tiwari posits that the novels are the modern generation, which disregards all these constraints

for love and marriage. It has to modify the uncompromising nature of the traditional society. She argues on the issues of modern cultural representation in Bhagat's novel which is a revolutionary work portraying the modern culture of modern young Indians. So, modernization affects the conformity of inter-caste marriage in modern societies and relates the story with the extensive concept of changing modernized trends and developments of cultural representations.

Along with Tiwari's interpretation, there exist numerous analyses regarding the review of the novel. C. SreeVijaya Durga and Dr. V. B. Chaitra's joint work on the novel *Emerging Trends and Reflections of the Globalization of Human Sensibility, Aspirations and Ambitions: An Overview of Chetan Bhagat's Selected Novels* makes their conclusion through globalization views. They conclude:

Bhagat portrays the notion of globalization even in the food and behavioral culture of the individuals. Ananya who mis from orthodox family has to strictly adhere to the South Indian Tamil Brahmins food habits. Ananya while studying in Ahmedabad, due to her liberty and freedom of choice she eats non-veg and drinks. Being a Brahmin, it is not accepted in her family. In the novel, Ananya's attitude and behavior show the adoption of globalization when she is away from her home land. Chetan Bhagat's novel take the readers into the world of advanced technology with the portrayal of realistic pictures of the globalized contemporary Indian society. (461)

The fact is that novel itself yields globalizations and its aftermaths. Durga and Chaitra emphasis on the reflection of globalization of the lives of youth, aspirations and ambitions while engaging in the text. They grip wit the global subject but are seen absent in the issues and content of cultural conflict and equilibrium in their work.

Similarly, Ashwani Rana reviews in her article *Valid Issues and Concerns are*

*Raised in the Novel of Chetan Bhagat* that “Chetan Bhagat: a name that youth perceives very well in the light of alleged author ‘The Voice of Youth’ has picked up name and notoriety in the blink of an eye.” She adds, “He writes about the difficulties being looked at by the youth, however there is a protest of numerous that he recommends certain arrangements or to state an exit from those issues” (57-60). So, Rana’s paper hovers around a similar point where in the author has brought into the limelight of the essential subjects identified with the youth, politics, communalism and such yet has not opined any probable key to these issues.

The interpretation of K. M. Keerthika also focuses on youths, passion, culture, tradition and marriage while analyzing the text. Under the various analysis of topics, contemporary youth is different among them which is a new search by Keerthika. She concludes:

Literature sees reality basically. The modern novel catches the substances of contemporary life or youth both charming and the unsavory, paying little heed to ethics or ideological thought. Bhagat wonderfully draws out the various periods of life which makes the pre-users effectively comprehend about life. Bhagat through his novel takes us to the adventure of friendship, love marriage through the youth in the modern world. With the assistance of youths Bhagat brings out the reality in the novels *The Three Mistakes in My Life* and *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*. Bhagat’s novel voices out the sensibility of youth. Any Indian can relate with their aspirations, dream, love, pain, exam, fear, pressures of assignment and friendship are more natural. The greater truth is that nothing is impossible in the hands of youths. (138)

Krish and Ananya are the representative protagonists of contemporary youths. Krish thinks about Ananya, “Ananya Swaminathan best girl in the fresher batch seniors had

already anointed her on the dorm board. We had only twenty girls in a batch of two hundred. Most of the IIM girls are above shallow things like make-up, fitting clothes, contact lenses, removal of facial hair, body odor and feminine charm. I imagined Ms. Swaminathan had received more male attention in the last week than she had in her entire life” (3). As Ananya portrays contemporary woman, her body language is distinct from that of traditional women, so she is the representative of the second generation and ready to acquire all modern values. “Ananya knocked on my door at nine in the night. I had just sat down to study after dinner. Girls rarely visited boys’ dorms” testifies Ananya as modern woman looking independent, confident and enjoying all her freedom to achieve her goal and ambition (22).

The author has streamed all characteristics as much as possible into Ananya. Bhagat has attempted to grant her as an archetypal as well as cultural girl. She faces hardships and suffers too much for her marriage. Ananya overcame all the obstacles of race, region and got her love beyond anyone. “Needless to say, one thing led to another and within two weeks we had sex. ‘This is my first time,’ she said after we did it and pointed to her mother’s picture on the wall” signifies the grateful character of challenging the values of society (26). Regarding the attitude and broad thinking of Ananya Swaminathan J. Cecile Priya argues “Ananya the woman of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is ready to overcome cultural differences, pride and prejudices, diversities, age old traditions for the one she loves. For her caste and cultural differences do not matter over her preferences” (1-7). Bhagat has transformed successfully to represent Ananya as a complete South Indian girl. She reflects her true spirit about the culture. She is a beautiful and confident girl like other heroines of Chetan Bhagat. Along with Ananya we ascertain her journey of love and the connectivity to the people. Thus, Priya successfully presents Ananya as a dashing and grateful character in Bhagat’s novel.

The reflection of psychoanalytic concept is also found in Bhagat's novel and by this inspiration Bhagat exposes his story in the protagonists and plotlines. Regarding psychoanalysis Ms. K. Prabha and Dr. R. Soundararajan's *Chetan Bhagat's 2 States: A Psychoanalytic Reading* review from the perspective of Sigmund Freud's "Oedipus complex" in Bhagat's novel. According to Prabha and Soundararajan "Oedipus complex" is a notion that "inculcates the child's unconscious sexual desire for opposite sex parents and hatred for the same sex parent" (2357). In the plot of Bhagat's story, we can interact with the psychoanalytical impacts such as emotional struggle, unconscious mind, repression, anxiety and depression. Krish, a major character of the novel, gets a letter from his father agitates him a lot. Krish's mind is conceited with hatred towards his father. Family matters, obstacles in love life, workload in the workplace strive for the rate of anxiety within him. In the late night, he visits his mother to have a peaceful sleep. He utters "I came back to my bed and tossed the letter in the bin. I felt light after speaking to my mother and drifted off to sleep in five minutes. What would be the world without mothers" (159). This act of analysis reveals the repress and inner desires of Krish which he cannot express among anyone so he struggles with his feelings and repressed desires. His desires are stored in the unconscious mind and hates his father.

In order to see the style, methods, structure and themes of the novel, various theories and perspectives have been applied by different scholars. Regarding the novel, Laxman Babasaheb Patil opines that "The ingredients such as multi-social, multi-etymological, youths and love form the content of Bhagat's fiction. Bhagat watched the progression in social, traditional ways of life of the people in the view of globalization and he reflected in his novels. He investigates the impact of globalization on Indian culture. Bhagat uncovered and clarified the issues of India

after globalization” (7774-7778). Likewise, Shashank Chauhan places his view by emphasizing the Izzat. He claims that “In that, Bhagat is talking to countless love-torn Indians who have been heart-broken because of their family’s ‘Izzat’” (3). Thus, there too exist the broader interpretation of cultural conflict, cultural diversity, multiculturalism, cultural amalgamation and equilibrium in the existing researches and review.

This research paper marks a point of departure from existing research which concerns itself with young generation, youth culture, cultural modernization and globalization in the novel. The previous researches are absent with the issues of cultural conflict, cultural diversity, multiculturalism, intercultural marriage, cultural amalgamation and equilibrium with the changing era. Drawing on these claims regarding the novel, the new thing that I am going to deal with in this paper will be the subject matter of cultural conflict. Regarding cultural conflict Alexander Grewe explains "Cultural conflict is the conflict that occurs when people's expectations of a certain behavior coming from their cultural backgrounds are not met, as others have different cultural backgrounds and different expectations" (10). Grewe's idea of cultural conflict is reflected in Bhagat's novel. Krish's mother has her own cultural expectations and backgrounds and she believes in values. When Ananya rejects to obey Kavita's words, Kavita opines, "We do not have bahu in Punjabi like that, no matter how high-profile. We keep the, straight" (229). This act of analysis expresses Kavita's obsessive nature of dominating her daughter-in-law which is commonly found in Punjabi cultural backgrounds and not able to meet the cultural expectations. "I don't want my daughter-in-law to rise her voice or answer me back. She has to be under control" (229). This remark of Kavita signifies how according to their custom or cultural expectation, mother-in-law dominates their daughter-in-law in their culture.



Kavita expects a royal treatment from Ananya's family as she is groom's mother.

Krish reveals about Kavita's expectations as, "She doesn't want car, but she wants her siblings to appreciate she managed a car" (207). This is the custom and cultural expectations of Punjabi culture which do not fit among two different cultures.

Similarly, Ananya's mother has same cultural expectation about her own culture. When Radha knew that her daughter fell in love with a boy from other culture, she is shocked and Kavita states, "Are you aware you're my daughter?" "Are you aware that you tainting our reputation in the community?" (21). Their conversation exposes her desire to marry her daughter to someone from another culture, which Ananya's mother thinks as a humiliation in her own community. Radha believes that it is an honor to marry their children in their own community. Because of different cultural expectations and beliefs, Krish and Ananya's love association is strictly rejected by their parents. Thus, Krish and Ananya's love relationship does not meet their cultural expectations which becomes the cause of cultural conflict according to Grewe's theory.

As story centers on the protagonists, Krish and Ananya represent the various sequels of contemporary events of that particular place where they are living as rivals made by cultural differences. The protagonists are growing in the multicultural world where they are in problems such as conflict, disagreement in social adjustment and violation of cultural values among North Indian and South Indian. Regarding the claim that cultural conflict is the effects and result of multiculturalism, Amy Gutmann says:

Members of different cultural groups may share the same standards of adjustment, but nevertheless act unjustly out of hatred or distrust of others, or because they believe that social adjustment is less important than cultural

solidarity. Distinct from the problems realizing social adjustment in multicultural contexts. Standards of social adjustment themselves seem to be in conflict, and the conflicting standards are often associated with different cultures, so how do they discern standards of social adjustment in light of the apparently conflicting standards of different cultural groups? (171-206)

In fact the cause and effect of multiculturalism is an expansion of cultural conflict almost worldwide. Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* is also the output of these contemporary moments and consequences. The major protagonists are Krish and Ananya themselves witness this. Gutmann's idea of multiculturalism agrees with Bhagat's novel as well as its story and characters. Krish feels difficulty to adjust with in Tamil culture when he first time arrives in Chennai, an obstacle takes place with auto drivers. He talks Tamil language form as, "The Tamil font resembles those optical illusion puzzles that give you a headache if you stare at them long enough" (77). In this situation, Krish feels uncomfortable because of different cultural or social adjustment. When he reaches Ananya's home, he has difficulty adjusting in an alien culture. He experiences, "the firmness in his voice made me obey instantly, I wanted to wriggle out it, but a part of me wanted to see the drama unfold. Uncle's attention shifted to the new guests. Maybe he had made me intentionally. To show me what Ananya deserved and what I could never be. I preached in a corner chair like a domestic servant who is sometimes allowed to watch TV" (124). This act of observation reveals the suffocation and discomfort to adjust in others' culture as experienced by Krish as stated by Gutmann in his theory.

The reflection of cultural diversity is also seen in Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*, which is the characteristics of multiculturalism. In this regard, Robert Longley states, "Multiculturalism is the study of the way in which a society

deals with cultural diversity, both at the national and at the community level" (What is Multiculturalism? Definitions, Theories, and Examples). The consequences of cultural diversity on society have been primary concerns of the cultural critics and multiculturalism is the lens through which literature is analyzed to see how literature has represented the diversity in multicultural countries because literature cannot be separated from the society. The author's fantasy and creativity foregrounds the experiences he or she has had with culture and the surroundings of the society. Thus, multiculturalism "studies how cultural diversity is presented in literature" (5). Cultural diversity is a result of multiculturalism in particular not as a whole. Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* is the fusion and experiences of both cultural diversity and multiculturalism especially the result emerged in the current time. The protagonists of the novel Krish and Ananya are the representatives of the multicultural community in India. They are originally from the Indian community and attempt to survive in a multicultural world. They have been trying to fit in a vast and diversified world as well as prepare to change their mentality in a full and celebrating mood to adjust in cultural diversity.

During their marriage, Krish performs his own Punjabi marriage ceremony whereas Ananya performs her own Tamil marriage ceremony. "He grabbed my arm tight. 'Come inside,' he said, dragging me towards the mandapam. 'Hey aren't you supposed to convince me?' I said we had some more Tamil ceremonies. We had MalaiMaatral, which are involved in an exchange of garlands like Punjabi Jaimala" (262). The marriage ceremony is carried out in the middle of close relatives from both the culture, chantings's and blessings from the priests and the elders of the family. Dance plays a key role on Punjabi marriage whereas cultural rites and rituals play a significant role in Tamilian wedding. The reflection of Punjabi and Tamil wedding

cultural practices presents the diversity in the novel. So, cultural diversity is the main issue in the Bhagat's narrative in his novel. In the understanding of cultural diversity, Sukrita Paul Kumar states that "The cultural diversity here unfolds different races, religions, ethnics groups, regional and caste identities, adaptation and understanding of each other. So, different languages and cultures mutate, vegetate and flourish here" (74-83). The concept of Kumar's cultural diversity is related to Bhagat's novel where he has presented two states: North India and South India, Punjabi culture and Tamil culture, Punjabi society and Tamil society, Punjabi language and Tamil language.

Bhagat mentions in the novel as for Punjabi's food is a significant factor of cultural diversity. "For Punjabis, food triggers an emotional response, like say music" (222). A Punjabi wedding is incomplete without food and drinks. The author has presented varieties of food recipes included in the Punjabi wedding of Duke and Minti. "Food stalls served eight cuisines Punjabi, Chinese, home-style Indian, Thai, Italian, Mexican, Goan, and Lebanese" (208). Some other counters serve samosas, tikkas, and healthy sprouts. In comparison to Punjabi culture Bhagat explains food of Tamil people as a simple food. Krish says about the food, "We ordered kozhakattai, masala paniyaram, adikoozh, kandharappam, seeyam and athirasam" (181). By representing these food stuffs from two different cultures vividly portray the cultural diversity in terms of cuisines in the novel. So, Krish and Ananya's stable behaviors and the treatment of others indicate that they have a multicultural mindset though they seem to have accepted the reality or values of cultural diversity. Thus, there is the impact of cultural diversity is experienced in the characters of the Bhagat's novel and this diversity leads conflict in society.

On the other hand, regarding the impact of cultural diversity, Nick Stevenson reviews, "The ways in which the meanings and symbols of culture are produced

through complex processes of transformation, negotiation, and enunciation as well as by contestation and conflict" (62). The fusion of different cultural groups establishes the new society in India and they start to see the conflict between them which indicates the impact of multiculturalism in the novel.

There is the impact of multiculturalism in Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*. Multiculturalism permits people to elevate rights for the subsistence of their own group. Cultural diversity sanctions people with distinct cultures and standards to respect, understand one another. So, it has its own deformity and conflict between them. The cultural conflict is highlighted in the novel by the author. In this regard, Patrick West claims that "Due to the hatred between other cultures, people desire to live within their own land along with their own people rather than living alone in a pristine environment"(158). Moreover, the conception of West about the hurdles to endure for new people can be seen in this novel where Krish and Ananya are not embraced by their respective parents or families. Krish is not greeted by Ananya's parents when he comes to Chennai. "The long rectangular room looked like what would be left in a Punjabi drawing room was robbed. The sofas were simple, with cushions thinner than Indian Railways sleepers had and from the opposite of the decadent red velvet sofas of Pammiauty. There were pictures of various South Indian gods all around the room" (89). He witnesses isolation in an alien land as he gets it complicated to adjust up with a pristine environment as explained by West.

Similarly, Krish takes a moment to amalgamate with Ananya's family as they are not judged. Ananya too faces the same obstacle of separation when she came to Punjab. Ananya feels lonely at the beginning of Duke and Minti's Marriage. "Ananya let out a huge sigh after the Punjabi aunty gang left. You OK? I said. No, let me guess. You are not OK" (202). Krish's huge remarks "OK" reveals the isolation which

Ananya feels in Minti's marriage. It reflects the loneliness and difficulty faced by her in the adjustment of Punjabi culture. Ananya feels uncomfortable in marriage ceremony because of the different cultural values as she has been trapped between two diverse cultural characteristics. Duke and Minti's marriage is a Punjabi wedding which is a new cultural environment for Ananya thus, she feels uneasy and lonely.

The process of inducing their families is not an easy task for Krish and Ananya. So they depart from their relationship in an attempt to assemble their parents together. Each and every community consist its own socio-cultural norms and values, language, history, and culture. When two different cultures come together in a single community then conflict will take place. The same situation has been reflected in Bhagat's novel where conflict takes place between two communities that are North India and South India because every community despises each other's culture which becomes an obstacle for the marriage for the two different cultural groups. Krish's mother utters, "She is South Indian, my mother said, cutting me. So what? Let's see what your brothers and sisters say about Ananya. This wedding is a perfect excuse" (196). The hatred nature of Krish's mother is reflected in these lines and reveals that his mother dislikes Tamil cultured people or people from another community.

In the same way, Ananya's mother hates Punjabi cultured people. Krish says, "Her mother looked like she had just finished a grumble session. Ananya's mother continued, 'Intellectually, culturally zero. Something something crass, uneducated something' (49-51). This act of analysis remarks the hatred of Ananya's mother towards other culture. This situation leads to a huge cultural conflict among two different communities. In this regard, Annelise Riles claims that "Cultural conflict is not just conflict between communities: it is conflict within communities as well" (273-308). The universal truth is that in every culture, persons disagree about others'

cultural values and they hate as well as offend each other, wrong each other, misunderstand one another, exert power over others, and leverage the tensions and ambiguities in cultural norms in order to push for changes in those norms. Thus, this act of enforcement and hatred resulted in cultural conflict between communities or within communities in Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*.

Similarly, Bhikhu Parek argues that "the problem arises in the multiculturalism due to their distinctions that occur between cultures in multicultural society and though multicultural society allows a homogeneous state of existence, the problem arises when the distinctions arise as who is superior than whom"(115). Same situation has been depicted in Chetan Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*, when the parents of Krish and Ananya's parents initiate to highlight their own culture by diminishing the other cultures. The real conflict begins when Krish and Ananya plan to introduce their parents in convocation day in IIMA. Krish started to introduce his mother to Ananya's parents. He utters, "I whispered, Get up. Let us introduce ourselves. They are Madrasi? My mother asked, shocked. Shsh Tamilian, I said" (46). Ananya also introduced her family with Krish's parents, "Mom, this is Krish and this is Krish's mother. Hello, Ananya's mother said, looking just as stunned as my mother" (46). Both parents were shocked while looking at each other because of their cultural differences. The conflict initiates between them when they attempt to accentuate their respective culture as superior. Radha, Ananya's mother blamed Kavita, Krish's mother as a savage uneducated person.

In the same way, Kavita also unveils her own Punjabi culture as a higher strata and charges against Radha's argument. Kavita opines about the South Indian culture as, "These South Indians don't know how to control their daughters. From Hema Malini to Sridevi. All of them are trying to catch Punjabi men" (49). Radha also

comments upon Kavita's argument as, "Something somethingilla knowledge Punjabi people something" (51). Radha argues that Punjabi people are uneducated and culturally zero. Both of the families rejected and denied each others' culture and uncover cultural misunderstanding against one another that comes from both sides which leads to cultural conflict in between two distinct cultures. To support this claim, Thorsten Sellin states:

Cultural conflict as a "conflict of conduct norms" that such conflict may arise as a result of a process of group differentiation within a cultural system or areas, or as a result of contact between norms drawn from different cultural systems or areas, and that we may study all such conflicts either by investigating of a person in whom the conflict is assumed to be internalized or by study of violation in groups or areas within it is assumed that such conflicts occur. (97-103)

Bhagat presents the cultural conflict in his novel and it occurs when two different cultures come in contact and brings group differentiation among Punjabi culture and Tamil culture. So, this cultural group differentiation in cultural system brings conflict between two states. Thus, conflict of conduct norms varies according to cultural system when this conductive norm does not meet fit in social system then it leads cultural conflict.

Cultures are different within the ways of life, beliefs, traditions and laws between distinct countries or states, religions, communities and other people. People see culture as an encompassing overview of large groups of people and how their lifestyle and beliefs vary; this is where cultural conflict takes place. Some of the conflicts between cultures are imposed by internal conductive norms. Cultural conflict takes place because of different beliefs and values of a particular ethnic or cultural



group. Regarding this, Gregory S. Berns and Scott Atran writes that "Cultural conflict will occur only when the beliefs and traditions of one cultural group represent to challenge to individuals of another" (633-639). Just like what Berns and Atran's argue, Bhagat has not only indicated the conflict among two different families that are Punjabi and Tamilian but also in a workplace of Ananya's father Mr. Swaminathan. The boss of Mr. Swaminathan Mr. Verma orders Swaminathan to do a presentation which he does not know. "That GM Verma. In my thirty years at the bank I haven't done any report. Now, I have to make a pinpoint presentation as well. Powerpoint presentation? I asked. Yes that one. Intentionally, the rascal have me something that I don't understand" (109). So, Mr. Swaminathan gets frustrated with his boss and he recalls an event where Mr. Verma, a North Indian says, "Swaminathan, do you know why they made you a deputy GM and sent me to become GM?... He said it was because South Indians are top class number two officers, but horrible in number of positions" (143). Mr. Swaminathan hates his boss because he is from typical North Indian that is from other state or culture. These comments have made him uncomfortable and made him angry with the people from other cultures or states. Mr. Verma challenges Swaminathan's culture and as a result conflict takes place between them. Therefore, Bhagat's portrayal these characters fit in the issue of cultural conflict as reflected in his novel.

On the contrary, Bhagat depicts the conflict between the Punjabi and Tamil cultures in a common way by emphasizing the dispute among Krish and the auto drivers in Chennai. "Meter illa, the driver said loudly, his personality taking on a more aggressive form as he left the airport" (77). Another surprising thing is Bhagat's representation of Krish's boss who is South Indian to impart the conflict among these two cultures individually. To support this claim, Jonathan H. Turner defines cultural

conflict as a conflict caused by "differences in cultural values and beliefs that places people at odds with one another" (87). Krish and Ananya are from two different cultures and remain at odds. They look opposite of one another because of cultural distinction and there are differences in their cultural beliefs and values which places them odds with one another. When Krish offers Ananya a lunch, the cultural conflict is even more obvious in the conversation between them. Ananya says, "I didn't say I am a practicing Tam Brahmin. But you should know that I am born into the purest upper caste communities ever created. What about you, commoner?" (7). In the same way, Krish replies, "I am Punjabi, though I never lived in Punjabi. I grew up in Delhi. And I have no idea about my caste, but we do eat chicken. And I can digest bad sambar better than Tamil Brahmins" (7). Ananya's remark 'commoner' reveals the value of caste that makes Krish odd from Tamil culture and Krish's comment upon 'I can digest bad sambar better than Tamil Brahmins' uncovers the differences in beliefs and values about other cultures, which makes odd to one another's culture. As result, this oddness becomes conflict between Punjabi and Tamil. This act of observation reflects the oddness in cultural beliefs about cuisine among Punjabi and Tamil where both Krish and Ananya feel odds with each other. Thus, this differences in cultural beliefs leads to conflict in society or community and individuals.

Ananya's parents have strong faith in Tamil culture, whereas Krish's mother has also the same beliefs about her culture. So, these various beliefs in culture evoke conflict as observed in the conversation between characters. When Ananya's mother sees Krish's mother then "Ananya's mother elbowed her husband. They stood up, pulled up. Ananya's scrawny brother came between them and found some empty seats five rows away" (48). In the same way, Krish's mother heard them talk and her mouth fell open. She says, "They are Madrasis? My mother asked, shocked. Shsh,

Tamilian. I have come to see you, not to sit next to Madrasis" (46). This encounter between North Indian and South Indian families reveals the conflict that occurs because of differences in cultural values and feels odd toward each other as supported by Turner.

Amalgamation is one of the major factors in multiculturalism. In the novel, Bhagat highlights how people emphasize much on the process of uniting or merging to more cultures. The author raises the issue of unifying people who are from different cultural backgrounds or other states: North India and South India. Bhagat has presented distinct cultural values together and also revealed a process of amalgamating Punjabi and Tamil culture through marriage. Generally, marriage is a spiritual or cultural event in which two spirits assimilate and become one. The protagonist in this novel goes through a sequence of events to marry Ananya. Krish and Ananya's marriage unites diverse cultural values in a single bowl and enhance tolerance between two different cultures which is the best example of amalgamation. In understanding of amalgamation, Emily Commins writes, "Amalgamation refers to the process of mixing two cultures to create a new culture" (Amalgamation in Sociology: Gene, Transfer and Ethnicity). To prove this argument, Bhagat illustrates a couple's love story and how they come up with objections to eventually mix their two entirely unique families in the event of marriage. In the novel, Bhagat's portrayal of the characters Krish and Ananya, depicts two different cultures that are Punjabi and Tamil. During their marriage both cultures; Punjabi and Tamil cultures are mixed together which unite two culturally diverse families.

A waiter rang a hand bell, announcing the speech and cake-cutting ceremony. Relatives came around and sat on the chairs. The Tamilians and Punjabis looked at each other. In fact, Ananya first told us about Krish, we were quite

upset. As Tamilians know, we are so proud of our own culture. We also thought our daughter is one in a million, she will get her best of boys in our own community. Why must she go for a Punjabi boy? (264-265)

This incident inculcates the amalgamation and admixture of two different cultures together which ensures unity and tolerance among diverse cultural values through marriage.

Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* also reveals intercultural marriage which is still frowned upon in India. Bhagat's central concern is intercultural marriage because marriage is a social practice which can take place within the same community or different community. Krish and Ananya are from different community or cultural backgrounds but they decide to marry with each other and they choose to marry with their families' approval instead of eloping. So, both protagonists face obstacles to convince their families to grant their intercultural marriage despite the shortcomings and behaviors of individuals in both cultures. Krish and Ananya are ready for intercultural marriage, but their parents disagree with them. Thus, intercultural marriage is a marriage between individuals with different cultural backgrounds as reflected in Bhagat's novel. Such an incident raises a problem in a multicultural country if a couple decides to marry in an intercultural way. Krish Malhotra, a Punjabi boy, married to Ananya Swaminathan, a Tamil Brahmin girl. This event is represented in the novel wisely by the author and it is the marriage which Bhagat has taken as an important event to maintain equilibrium or balance among diverse cultural values in between two states: North India and South India.

Cultural equilibrium is another factor in multiculturalism. In this regard, David D. Laitin and Barry Weingast claim that "Culture as an equilibrium is well- defined set of circumstances in which members of a cultural group, through shared symbols,

ritual, practices, and high level of interaction, are also able to condition their behavior on common knowledges or better cultural beliefs include such things as what boundaries of the group” (16). Towards the end of the novel, Bhagat successfully maintains equilibrium among different cultures to mark the end of cultural conflict. In this context, Krish says:

My cousins pushed me and Ananya together for a close dance. I held Ananya to me as 'we' moved on the dance floor. 'Ananya,' I wishpered in her ear. 'What?' she said softly. 'I love you and your father and your mother and your brother and your relatives,' I said. 'I love you and your clan, too,' she said. We kissed as Tamils and Punjabis danced around us. 'So, the self-imposed exile is over now? You said we'll only do it when we cross the finish line,' I said. 'Is that all you men think about?' she said. 'Only for the sake of uniting the nation,' I said. (267)

The author reveals the emotional balance between distinct cultures to balance national unity in multicultural society. In the novel, Bhagat bridges equilibrium among North India and South India, Punjabi culture and Tamil culture to maintain solidarity and tolerance in the country. The emotional speech of Ananya’s father reflects the state of cultural equilibrium or acceptance of intercultural marriage or multicultural values. He says, “It is not about communities. It’s about the kind of people we want to be with”, depicts the sense of equilibrium between two states through marriage (230). So, marriage is about the union of communities that unite people together despite having cultural differences. Krish and Ananya’s parents want their children to marry in their own tribes and culture. In the opinions of the parents, there is a lack of ‘cultural relativism’. Regarding this, Bhikhu Parekh talks about cultural relativism, “Cultural relativism is an essential factor in a multicultural country to avoid such

conflicts” (105). Parekh speaks about Kymika’s theory about multicultural society which claims the rights for various cultures in society. Each culture has their own history, language and lineage of their culture which is commonly found in a multicultural society.

To bridge cultural equilibrium Bhagat’s *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* stresses the need for cultural relativism. Through the novel, Bhagat analyzes the necessity and acceptance of cultural relativism among the younger generation. So, Krish and Ananya avoid the differences that exist between each other. Regarding cultural relativism, the first lesson in Patrick West's idea is suitable, "Don't respect the differences: Ignore differences" (151). So, the title of the chapter itself claims that instead of respecting diverse cultural backgrounds it is better to avoid their differences and consider every culture equally. In this situation, cultural equilibrium works effectively to bring tolerance or harmony among diverse cultures. To support this claim, David D. Laitin and Barry Weingast states, "A cultural equilibrium exists when members of a cultural group have overriding incentives to behave in a manner prescribed by the culture. Taking others' behavior as given, each individual's incentive in a particular circumstance covered by his or her culture is to behave in a manner prescribed by that culture. That is, each member's action in these circumstances constitute a sub game perfect equilibrium strategy" (15-20). So, the behavior prescribed by cultural specification must be sustained as the equilibrium of a particular game of interaction among society's members.

Cultural beliefs sustain as a balance or equilibrium in multicultural society which brings amalgamation among various cultural groups in the form of national unity. So, cultural equilibrium promotes unity and tolerance to unify people from diverse cultural values, which are vividly reflected in Bhagat's novel in its characters.

At last Ananya gives birth to twins, "Twins? She said in disbelief, looking ready to faint. Yes, the doctor said, 'Congratulation.' The nurse cleaned up the two babies and gave them to me. Be careful, she said as I took once in each arm. You are from two different states, right? So, what will be their state? The nurse said and chuckled. They'll be from a state called India, I said" (269). Ananya's final utterance, "They'll be from a state called India" proves the idea of cultural equilibrium which strengthens the national unity although they are in diversity (269). Thus, the author voices out of the need for unity in diversity in multicultural country.

Despite these differences between the Punjabi and Tamil culture, they have a sense of respect towards other's culture and heritage. When Radha complains about Chaitra, Krish says, "I can understand. We have people like that in Punjabis as well. People who loves to interfere in other people's lives" (153). This remark presents the respect, similarities as well as pride among different communities is seen in both cultures through Krish's behavior. So, Bhagat represents cultural conflict at the beginning of the novel but when the novel progresses, he also bridges the conflict between two states of North India and South India to show social solidarity, secularism, unity as well as tolerance in diversity. In this context, the speech of Ananya's father reveals the real theme of the novel. He states, "...Yes, the Tamilian in me is little disappointed. But Indian in me is quite happy and more than anything, the human being in me is happy. After all, we've decided to use this opportunity to create more loved ones for ourselves" (266). Through these lines Bhagat exposes the message of equilibrium and unity among diverse people or culture whether they are Punjabi or Tamil but the fact is that they all are Indian and it is a single state. Thus, the author assimilates these two different cultures to represent cultural conflict along with equilibrium as the multicultural characteristics of Indian society.

The survey of Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* makes it clear that critics have analyzed the rhetoric of multiculturalism in the text to dig out the cultural conflict and equilibrium which are dominant in the plot of the novel. Critics to some extent, have demonstrated the role of multiculturalism in the future of a diverse nation. However, they have discussed much on the influence of modernization in shaping the mantras of unity in diversity in multicultural countries where various cultures, religions and traditions are deep-rooted. Bhagat has been praised for this use of the rhetoric of multiculturalism. Bhagat stipulates a vivid picture of distinct cultural norms and values, beliefs and traditions of different cultural and ethnic groups co-existing in a single country and how these variations in beliefs lead conflict in the society or community. So, the author has not only presented the problems and obstacles of multiculturalism but also hinted to minimize the problems that arise in diversity through equilibrium, cultural balance, tolerance and harmony. Thus, Bhagat's novel highlights the issues of culture, diversity, marriage, cultural conflict, multiculturalism, amalgamation, relativism and equilibrium.

To conclude, this research explores the discourse of cultural conflict and equilibrium created by multiculturalism in Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*. Bhagat presents the necessity for the acceptance of multiculturalism to mark the end of conflict to establish peace and harmony in country. The author also recalls about the need of 'cultural relativism' which is the requirement of the hour in this contemporary diverse world. The results that rise in a multicultural society and its consequences are pointed out in the novel. So, if cultural relativism is neglected from the minds of the diverse people in multiculturalism then it leads to conflict in country or society in various aspects. Acceptance and tolerance towards each other's culture is essential in cultural diversity. This research paper finds the author's effort of



association between different cultures and society as well as limited this research material to the primary text. On the other hand, this research paper deals with questions about the diversities and cultural differences that arise in a multicultural society. Bhagat evokes the voices of national unity in diversity in Indian societies. Multiculturalism is a sociological approach which intends to examine the cultural context of the novel and analyzes the socio-cultural problems created by cultural conflict in multicultural society. Thus, the impact and complexities of Indian culture and the problems creeping up because of cultural gaps are reflected in Bhagat's novel.

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