

## **Pyaar ki jeet: 2 States Chetan Bhagat's new book**

*By Infochange India*

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*So, Chetan Bhagat steals the limelight yet again! This time he isn't spending a night at the call centre or showing off at IIT (the things he did were certainly risky!). Instead, he uses the story of his own life as the plot of his new book.*

Reminiscent of the 1980s Bollywood blockbuster *Ek Duj Ke Liye*, *2 States* has a predictable plot. But Bhagat compensates predictability with racy prose that keeps the reader hooked.

The boy in the book (Krish) is a hardcore Punjabi and the girl a beautiful Tamilian (Ananya). They fall in love and want to get married, obviously against their parents' wishes.

Bhagat writes: Love marriages around the world are simple. Boy loves girl, girl loves boy, they get married. But in India it's not that simple. Boy loves girl, girl loves boy. Boy's family has to love girl and girl's family has to love boy. Boy's family has to love girl's family and girl's family has to love boy's family.

Krish and Ananya are classmates (and roommates) at IIM-Ahmedabad, India's premium business school. They readily fulfil the first criteria of a love marriage, but achieving the other two is a Herculean task (nature never intended 'loud' Punjabis and 'mellow' Tamilians to be relatives!).

So, with the firm resolve of seeing their parents smile on their wedding day (had they eloped, the book wouldn't have run into 270 pages!), the two set out to bring the families together. But, it's easier to fight and rebel than to convince.

What ensues is a gripping Bollywood-style tale -- schemes and plans to win over the parents, and how the respective parents try to keep their respective children within the bounds of their respective traditions.

But, as the saying in Bollywood goes: *Hogi pyaar ki jeet* (love will always triumph). And so it does, at the end.

The pull of *2 States* isn't the plot, it's the author's writing style. Right through the book, Bhagat gives us the sights, sounds and taste of the story. Like his other three books, he writes in a style that instantly connects with teenagers.

But for all the fame Bhagat has earned, he also has his share of critics. Many veteran writers believe that Bhagat's writing skills aren't a credit to his popularity. They say his 'incorrect' writing influences young minds to adopt the same incorrect English as his.

Even Bhagat's sternest critics, however, cannot deny that the author has brought about a revolution in writing. His short, crisp real life stories with their various twists and turns keep readers glued to his books.

After reading *2 States* I could not help but feel that after 60 years of independence, India remains divided when it comes to people from different parts of the country. Why are north Indians considered cousins of ET down south? Why are south Indian traditions and languages a laughing matter to north Indians? Are we not all Indians, part of the same country?

The cultural divide in India is more than what meets the eye. Industry, infrastructure, transportation, modernisation... in the last six decades our country has grown faster than was ever imagined. Villages have grown into towns, towns into cities, and cities into metropolises. Three decades ago, telephones and cars were luxuries that many could ill-afford. Not anymore.

But although the times may have changed, our attitudes have remained rooted! With all this 'growth' we haven't been able to outgrow our old mindset. We seem to be slaves to traditions that have long lost out on logic. Our so-called 'modernity' hasn't erased engrained ideologies. Although the caste system was abolished years ago, people in India still follow it blindly. Racial discrimination also creeps in when anxious parents look for a 'perfect match' for their children. In the best of times we are outwardly modern but inwardly we still live in the past.

Bhagat quotes an incident where his mother insists that he marry a girl because her father owns six petrol pumps and the family is rich -- a typical middleclass woman wanting her child to achieve what she could only dream of achieving.

By contrast, many of the younger generation don't give a damn whether the person they love is from a different religion or state, or belongs to a different economic strata.

Finally, I would like to quote from the book: As Krish holds his twin sons for the first time outside the operation theatre, a nurse sidles up and asks him, "You and your wife are from different states right... so which state are these two (pointing to the infants) going to belong to?" Krish answers emphatically: "They'll be Indians."

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