

Exploring Personal Narratives in Chetan Bhagat's *Two States*

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Abstract:

Chetan Bhagat is a popular novelist and he admits that this novel is based on his experiences. He intertwines the personal touch with the art of fiction writing in this novel. The work of fiction for him is a tool of self-discovery, where he remembers and rewrites the memories of love relationship. The analysis of biographical elements of the author may allow us understand why the characters in this novel behave in a particular way, and analyze the author's point of view.

Keywords: Popular Fiction, Literary, Chetan Bhagat.



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Introduction

Life writing is a form of autobiographical writing, considered non-fiction and includes autobiography, biography, memoirs, personal essay and travelogue. Personal experience and personal life plays an important role in the form called life writing. According to Susan Green the term violates the traditional borders of different forms such as autobiography, biography and fiction. "It enables the writer and reader to better understand themselves and their relationship to the world". (Green, 50)

Novelists often bring their personal experiences to their novel. They do it by sharing their experiences as a narrator. The story may not be necessarily the personal story of the novelist but some of the personal experiences are embedded in the story by making it exaggerated, garnished and tailored well according to the theme and plot of the story. The reader too is interested to go beyond the limits of the novel and explore the possibility of embedded personal experiences of the author in the novel. The reader tries to figure out the factors of personal life that influences the novel and its writing. There's a danger that rather fictitious characters and narration can be mistaken to be the personal experience of the novelist.

Whenever we read novels, we try to relate the facts in the novel to real life. The same can be true to an author who relates the facts, experiences and situations of real life to the characters in a novel. This makes the novel realistic and makes the reader to find the story very interesting. The way Chetan Bhagat presents his story is not by fantasizing it from isolation, he does it from the experiences, learning and society, by doing this he relates well with the readers. According to the author *Two States* is the story of his own marriage, he requests the readers to consider it as fiction though.

In travelogues, autobiographies, memoirs and other such non-fiction writings, we are sure that the narrator is the writer. In novels it is not so, there are two kinds of presenting the self, according to Mridula Garg, the self can be presented in two ways. One, it can be narrated as the author himself has experienced something and reciting it to the readers. Second, it can be presented in a fictitious, exaggerated fashion garnishing it with vivid explanation. (Garg, 92)

In this presentation I would like to bring autobiographical elements in his novel *2 States*. This approach; by allowing us to consider the implied meanings, may help understand his novel in a different perspective. The analysis of biographical elements of the author Bhagat may allow us understand why the characters in this novel behave in a particular way, and analyze the author's point of view.

Both fiction and autobiography is a narrative construction. Even now readers have not stopped debating whether Kamla Das's "My story" is fiction or autobiography. The author himself had made different statements about it. The more radical readers respect it as an example of honest, uninhibited autobiography while the conservatives would love to call all that romance simple fiction. (Satchidanandan,7)

Chetan Bhagat is considered a popular writer with seven novels and two non-fiction books. His novels are considered very popular among the youth. In *2 States* he narrates to us the story of his marriage. The story is based on his real life experience of his marriage with his wife Anusha but in the novel the characters are named different. The story is embroidered, garnished and polished well to suit the tastes of his readers. The characters are also pictured according to the need of the plot. He is known to draw inspiration from not only his life but from the history, society and everyday life. In his first novel *Five Point Someone*, Bhagat made use of his experiences of studying in IIT Delhi. He makes use of the Gujarat riots, earthquake in Bhuj and other issues like corruption in society as the background or canvas to narrate his other novels. These elements look imaginary in those novels but it is drawn from the society and real life experiences.

The word 'novel' means new form and the novelist tries to break the barriers of tradition to attempt a new way of story-telling. Chetan Bhagat makes use of his personal experiences and merges it with the fiction techniques. Name of the characters and places are often changed but they are usually explained in great detail, sometimes exaggerated. His plots are simple, language is easy, conversational and filled with humour and satire. The changes done in the characterization is for the artistic purposes.(Thalayamoorthy)

Mridula Garg addresses two main questions related to writing the self. The first one is the definition of self and second why does one write? According to her, self is something that has to be discovered by each individual. (Garg, 95) Bhagat admits that he writes not just for entertaining but to bring about a change in the society. When we consider *Five point someone* and *2 States*, we can consider it as a form of self-discovery. The works of fiction is a tool of self-discovery for bhagat where he remembers and rewrites his memories of studying at IIT Delhi and his love story at IIM Ahmedabad. The second question raised is why one writes? Albert Camus considers novel as never anything but a philosophy put into images. Disillusionment with oneself, with the system and the world may sometimes allow the novelist to critique their self. This may allow the fiction writer to come up with his work. Garg continues her idea of why one writes.

One writes because one is not ready to accept the world impinging on the self, or the self-formed by the environment and the accepted value system at their face value. One has a vision of an alternate world, which is substantially different from the given world and in which, the self too takes on a different form. (Garg, 97)

and considers fiction as the best medium to write the self and a fiction writer as a psychologist as follows:

Almost all fiction writers are amateur psychologists. They probe into the psyche of their protagonists, put them in unusual, demanding situations and try to chart their behavior. Practicing psychiatrists may well balk at their

attempts but writers can hit back by asserting, that while the former may be technically trained they had commonsense. (Garg, 98)

According to the psychoanalytical approach propogated and employed by Freud and Erikson, the texts; like dreams express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author. A literary work is the manifestation of the author's own neurosis. (Kroeber, Kluckhohn. 1952)

The novel *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* is a novel inspired and based on the real life story of the author Chetan Bhagat. The story is about Krish Malhotra and Ananya Swaminathan; classmates during their study in IIM Ahmedabad. They become friends, fall in love with each other and after their graduation they decide to get married to each other. They decided to do it with the approval of their parents. They are from a different cultural, geographical background. Getting consent from their parents for their marriage becomes a herculean task. They both try to win over the hearts of the families to get their approval. Finally after they are through all the hurdles, they get married. The story ends when this happily married couple becomes parents with their newborn twins.

There are lot of similarities when we consider the real life story of Bhagat and the novel *2 States*. The title story of my marriage hints the inspiration drawn from the authors own life.

We go beyond the novel and try to find interesting facts about that novel, novelist and the personal life. We do this to get more understanding of the influences, real life situations that helped author in storytelling. This broadens our perspective and helps understand the text better.

Chetan bhagat is from Punjab and his wife Anusha is from Tamilnadu. The protagonists Krish and Ananya of the novel are form Punjab and Tamilnadu respectively. As it happened in the real life Krish and Ananya meet when they are studying in IIM Ahmedabad. They fall in love and decided to get married to each other. The pattern in the story has exact match with the real life story. The places too are drawn from the real life story, Delhi and Chennai.

Another personal element in the novel is about the father son relationship that is reflected in framing the father role in his novels. Bhagat said that he didn't have a very good relationship with his father but over the days he is trying to make it up to it. In *2 States*, Krish fights with his father, his father being very strict. In Bhagat's first novel *Five point someone*, the father roles are either weak, harsh or dull. Hari doesn't like his father, Alok's father is paralised and Ryan's father is very strict. According to Bhagat his unusual relationship with his father has resulted in making him write (about father son relationships), this is how he shows his rebellious nature and his true relationship with his father is brought to light by bringing father son issues in his novels.

Writing the story of his marriage gave Bhagat a satisfaction. He states that in his real life, his father did not attend their marriage. The story allowed him to transform it a little bit to get a sense of happiness and contentment. In the novel Krish's father finally makes it to the marriage function. Another personal element in the story is that the author finds some sort of relief by considering to forgive his father. (Bhagat, 240). In the novel the protagonist Krish goes to a guruji, to find solution to his sleeplessness and stress. Guruji suggests him to leave the burden of the past behind and to forgive. By meditating and forgiving himself and his father Krish feels refreshed.

In an interview by Priya Gupta which is published in times of india Chetan Bhagat shares his views about his novel *2 states*. Bhagat considers that the book to him is all about father-son relationship. In his personal life Bhagat observed the authoritarian way of his father and thinks that he was not fair enough to his mother. Realizing and resenting this nature of his father, Bhagat wrote *2 states* to forgive his father. (Gupta)

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