

Indian Marital Dynamics in Select Novels of Chetan Bhagat: A Multifaceted Study

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Abstract

Marriage is the unification of two souls and two families. In India, marriages are done in different traditions according to cultural norms. Different community people follow their way of marriage traditions in India at the time of the ceremony. Even nowadays inter-caste marriages are happening in Indian society. Chetan Bhagat depicts the marriage system in Indian society. He portrays the traditions and customs in the marriage system of Indian society through the works *2 States*, *Half Girlfriend*, and *One Indian Girl*. This paper tries to analyse the conflicts and crucial elements in the Indian marriage system. The dowry is one of the crucial elements in the marriage system in many parts of the nation. In the current scenario, many people support inter-caste marriages apart from their community and religion. In modern society, people interact with various people from other religions and they praise every tradition and norm of a different community.

Keywords: Marriage, Customs, Traditions, Dowry, Class, Culture, Modernity

1. Introduction

There are different traditions and customs in the Indian marriage system. Although there have been significant changes in the arranged marriage tradition, it is continuing in India today. Parents nowadays are worried about their children's future and get approval from their side before arranging the marriage. There are many processes before and after marriage in Indian society. The most common thing in the Indian marriage system is dowry, which plays a significant role in the part of marriage. (Vimal A, & Pillai S.R, 2024)

2. About the Artist

The famous author of Indian Writing in English is Chetan Bhagat. His works concentrate on the younger generation in the current society. Most of his works kept youth as a base. Chetan Bhagat also depicts the system of marriage in Indian society through his novels. He throws some light on the marriage system in Indian society through his works *2 States*, *Half Girlfriend*, and *One Indian Girl*. He also shows the current scenario and the present problems occurring in society. Through his works, Chetan Bhagat gives valuable suggestions and solutions for the younger generation. He impresses the current generation with his narrating style and usage of the effortless understandable English language.

3. Select Novels

2 States (2009): The novel *2 States: The Story of My Marriage*, is a tale of a couple from two different places. It shows Northern and Southern India through the characters Krish and Ananya. These characters are in love with each other and struggle to get married. Krish and Ananya try a lot and deal with many problems to convince their parents to get approval for the marriage. The two families didn't accept the love of the couple, the cultural clash, and some other issues between the two families. These conflicts are still coming to the end of marriage. The novel shows the marriage system in the Tamil and Punjabi traditional ways and also depicts the dowry, one of the crucial elements in Indian marriage systems.

Half Girlfriend (2014): The novel *Half Girlfriend* is the story of the characters Madhav Jha and Riya Somani. The novel depicts the hurdles and various problems faced by Madhav Jha. In this tale, Chetan Bhagat portrays the importance of the English language, Madhav Jha, who is from rural Bihar cannot communicate English well. Madhav Jha fell in love with Riya Somani at St. Stephen's College, but Riya doesn't have a perfect relationship with him. The novel throws the marital norms in both the family of Riya and Madhav.

One Indian Girl (2016): The *One Indian Girl* is a journey of the character Radhika Mehta. The tale portrays the journey of the independent woman Radhika Mehta and shows the problems and relationship issues faced by her in society.

Radhika, who is not like any other traditional Indian girl, needs freedom and to make individual decisions on her own. The story starts with the ceremony day before the marriage. Even at the very first it shows the difference between the groom's side and the bride's side and explores the mentality of the bride side family towards the groom's family. Radhika Mehta got into Goldman Sachs and earned a lot by her skills. On the day of her marriage, both her ex-boyfriends came and she cancelled her marriage.

4. Review of Literature

Mamta Gohla (2019) in her research paper entitled *Inter-Caste Marriage and Indian Society in the Novels of Chetan Bhagat* explains that the one of big matters in India is inter-caste and inter-religious marriage. Most Indian parents did not allow their sons or daughter to marry them to other caste people. Nowadays the younger generation is moving to different places for jobs and they meet people from other regions. They don't discriminate against anyone and praise other festivals too.

Sapna Tiwari (2013) in the research article titled *Inter-Caste Marriage and Indian Society in the Novels of Chetan Bhagat* explores that modernity has changed many aspects of society. People in metro and urban society have come to embrace inter-caste marriage as well. The current social environment has seen a significant transformation recently. The parents of the boy side and girl side started to accept the weddings by overcoming their caste. Tiwari also states the impact of modernistic conditions on society. Both urban and rural areas have a different mindset towards inter-caste marriage, people in metros accept the difference but some others are still following the conventional norms and against the inter-caste marriages.

Pinky Lade (2019) in her paper entitled *Inter-Caste Marriage in the Novels of Chetan Bhagat* shows the system of marriage customs in India. The current generation is trying to overcome the traditional system of Indian marriages within the same caste and religion. The current generation praises all the festivals of other region people. Pinky depicts the significant role of parents to teach about the norms and practices of the different festivals. Selecting a life partner is a normal phenomenon in modern countries, however, in our society life partner selection is complicated.

Ramesh H Patil (2022) in his paper *Change in Rural Marriage System and Problems of Marital Pair Selection* delivers the issues that come up as a result of modification to the system of marriage in rural areas. Marriage has undergone significant alteration as a social institution. Relationships with other family members are crucial in conventional rural communities when organizing marriages. In order for the social systems to continue and continue to function, the basic needs of society must be met. Ramesh depicts the changes in marital practices and marriage law. Young people in rural areas are not ready to marry due to some unreasonable conditions. The standard of living in rural areas is very low and the conventional works are still followed by the people.

5. Methodology of the Study

The study focuses on the works of Chetan Bhagat for a quality understanding of the marriage system in India and its connections towards culture. The secondary materials were gathered from libraries, internet sources, research articles, etc.

6. Inter-caste Marriage and Dowry

The struggles and conflicts between the couple from different places are shown in the novel *2 States*. The clash between the Tamil and Punjabi cultures is depicted through the characters. The characters Krish and Ananya are in love with each other and they face hardship to get married. Chetan Bhagat depicts the marriage system in India as

Love marriages around the world are simple:

Boy loves girl. Girl loves boy. They get married.

In India, there are a few more steps:

Boy loves girl. Girl loves boy.

Girl's family has to love boy. Boy's family has to love girl.

Girl's family has to love boy's family. Boy's family has to love girl's family

Girl and boy still love each other. They get married. (*2 States*, Chetan Bhagat)

During their college days, Krish and Ananya are in love with each other. They also make some future decisions about their marriage. On the day of convocation, they convey their opinions to both families. Both the parents from each side didn't accept the love between Krish and Ananya. In various nations a couple getting married to their favourite partner is very simple, they are in a relationship, like each other, and every family member attends their marriage ceremony. In India, it is different, apart from the love between the couple, the two families need to like each other and need to approve of marriage. When they get the approval for marriage from their parents, they check some of the lists like same caste, same religion in the society, the economic condition of the family, way of lifestyle in the society, etc.

Chetan Bhagat portrays the characters Krish from Punjab and Ananya from Tamil Nadu. They both belong to different regions in India and have differences in culture, traditions, customs, and social norms. Both families have their own norms. One of the pivotal parts seen in every family is marriage. The minds of parental side from each side of the families are skilfully portrayed by Chetan Bhagat.

After the clash on convocation day, Krish was placed in Chennai and he try to mingle with Ananya's parents for the approval of marriage. Krish faces a lot of conflicts during the job and with Ananya's parents. The circumstances are in here are completely different for Krish. When Krish helps Ananya's father for the presentation as well as gave the chance to sing in his office event to Ananya's mother, they both accept Krish. In India for marriage getting approval from both families is important. Accepting the groom or bride from the relative side is more significant in the Indian marital system. Ananya also went to Delhi with Krish to mingle with his mother. Same way Ananya also faces some of the conflicts in Krish's home. Krish's mom didn't like her, because Ananya was a South Indian. Deciding the people by their region, race, culture, religion etc. are still prevailing in society.

The dowry is the prime element in the Indian marriage system. It can be in any form like cash, expensive things, properties, etc. In the marriage system in India, the bride's family will give something to the groom's family. When Ananya went to Minti's pre-wedding ceremony, the bride's side gave a car key in a tiny box to the groom. The dowry procedure in the marriage system is continued in every part of the nation and it is regarded as part in culture. Family pride, reputation and economical status are the crucial contexts seen in the dowry. Ananya is shocked towards the drinks party at the Punjabi wedding ceremony. Every marriage function on the Punjabi side follows the same manner. Chetan Bhagat lights out modern values and their presence in the Indian context through the wedding ceremony.

On the day of Minti's Marriage, the whole thing in a very grand manner especially the variety of food items. In the Punjabi norms, the variety of food is more crucial. During the ceremony, the groom's side was so abnormal. The problem occurs due to the conflict in the dowry, "When Rajji gave the Hyundai keys... costs five lakh, Santro only three lakh" (2 States, 209). Because the groom's side already revealed to everyone in their family that is Hyundai Accent, now they feel like they were tricked by the bride's side. So, the groom's side decides to stop the ceremony until the change in dowry. This is the prime role of the dowry, which play a main role in marriages in India. The bride's side begged the groom's family to continue the ceremony and they decided to make cash for the shortage part of the dowry. The family members on the bride's side gave jewels and cash in their hands and handed them over to the groom's father. In the hectic situation, Ananya raised her voice, and everyone in the ceremony turned toward her. Ananya called every young generation including Duke for the short conference.

Ananya starts the conversation with the groom about his job and salary, she also talks about Minti, a pretty girl you have got in the case of arranged marriage. The bride's family has spent a lot of cash apart from their will to arrange the ceremony and explain everything to the younger generations. After the whole conversation with Ananya, the groom's mind changed and decide to marry Minti. This shows the younger generation today can realize the truth and they can able to change themselves. The meeting is full of the young generation on both sides because of Ananya's perfect plan that who can change the future. Finally, the ceremony starts again. Everyone on both sides appreciated her bravery and boldness. Through this context, Chetan Bhagat points out the importance of young people for the changes.

On the other hand, inter-caste marriage in our Indian society is not simple, many families still now don't accept marriage, due to societal norms and their own superiority. The Punjabi and Tamil families are shown in the tale. When the couple decides to connect the two families, some clashes arise between them. The two families meet up in Goa, where Krish's mother gets angry with him when he helps Ananya's family. The mind set is like they trapped their boy. The Punjabis expect the gifts from the girl's side. Krish gave some ideas to Ananya to comfort her Punjabi mother. Ananya's parents gave some gift bags to Krish's mother. Due to the misunderstandings and unfair judgements, a clash came between the two families. Krish tries to convey his mother and says something about Ananya like "Fine, make her toe the line" (2 States, 229). The dominating mind in the patriarchal society is highlighted through the character Krish.

The marriage will be followed in the Tamil traditional way. Punjabis like non-veg at marriage ceremonies, but in Tamil tradition, there is no non-veg at marriage. At the marriage day ceremony, the traditional way such as Kashi Yatra and Maalai Maatral are shown in the novel. This explains that inter-caste marriages are slowly getting down in society.

7. Societal Norms in Marriage

In *Half Girlfriend*, some of the systems in marriage ceremonies are portrayed. The character Riya belongs to the elite family and Madhav belongs to the royal family. The elite family refers to high-class people. When Riya invites Madhav to her home for a party, the high-class people are shown there with some references. The way of food also changes according to their culture, here Riya family is fully vegetarian but the guests are non-vegetarians. When Madhav met Riya's father and mother, they wore high-class dresses and gadgets. The clothes of Madhav are different from other people at the party. The last name of every Indian is more important in India even in the current scenario, "Indians have to know your last name to place you" (*Half Girlfriend*, 54). Madhav feels unique at the party because everyone there is elite class. The judging context is clearly depicted by Chetan Bhagat by the Riya's parents. They judge Madhav by his last name and class.

After the relationship breakup, one day after college Madhav met Riya. Both of them plan to communicate inside the car because the cafe is fully crowded. Riya says that she is going to drop her studies. The family of Riya doesn't care about education. Riya gave her wedding card to Madhav. This is the simple mindset of every parent; they won't take more time when the perfect match comes for marriage. Riya's family likes Rohan, a growing-up businessman. The elite class people don't care about degrees. Many of the elite class people, don't allow women to go to work and men take care of all the business and whatever job. When Riya's family finds Rohan as a perfect match for her, they don't care about her studies. The importance towards marriage in Indian society is portrayed through Riya's parents.

More than many months, Madhav saw Riya at the hotel and they talk each other, at that moment he came to know Riya had divorced. When Riya came to Madhav's home, there she faces some conflicts with norms. In other countries once the couple gets divorced, they can live their life with others, it is very simple in other countries. But in India, once the couple gets divorced, there are many norms and restrictions to be followed. The man can get married to another woman even if he gets divorced, but when it comes to women it is directly reversed. There are so many divorced cases in our nation. Many parts of our country still don't respect divorced women. They are facing a lot of problems and difficulties because of social constraints imposed on them and their activities, as well as the negative social opinions held against them.

In Madhav's house, many questions are asked Riya by Madhav's mother about her past life. Madhav's mother didn't like Riya because she gets divorced, independent and wore Western outfits. Because in our society the views towards divorced girls by others are totally different. When Riya left from Dumraon, "Where is that divorcee friend of yours?" (*Half Girlfriend*, 191). This shows the mindset of people towards the divorced woman in our society. Madhav's mother speaks with Riya, and states that "You are divorced. You must be desperate for another man" (*Half Girlfriend*, 203).

There are many norms and customs in the Indian marriage system. After getting married, the independent system of women is not possible in the family. They can't make their own decision apart from their family norms. Rohan behaved very rude to Riya because Riya didn't communicate with her mother-in-law. In the family system, even the way of dressing also matters according to their traditions. Riya doesn't like wearing Indian clothes, but her mother-in-law comments on her dressing sense. Rohan attacks Riya for a dress code apart from their family tradition.

Every woman enters a new family, and her prime role of them is to adjust to any situation. Riya's mother states that "Women have to learn to adjust, beta" (*Half Girlfriend*, 202). That situation depicts the role of the married girl in another family tradition and norms. In the current scenario, some of the families give freedom to the women to be independent, but it's seen in very few cases. Because the family thinks that their own customs and norms are superior, so they didn't allow whatever things apart from their traditional norms.

8. Marital and Matrimonial Norms

On the other hand, the novel *One Indian Girl* consists of some conflicts in the marriage system and some of the problems related to the same. When it came to the marriage ceremony, both the bride side and the groom side have some differences in the Indian marriage system. Still, in the present scenario in every marriage, the bride's family is not equal to the groom's side. The groom's family is superior in the ceremony. The bride's family itself they think, gave their

daughter to another family, so they are inferior to them. The bride's side adjusts everything for the groom's side. When the rooms are in shortage during the ceremony, Radhika's mother states "They are the boy's side. Little bit also you don't understand?" (*One Indian Girl*, 04). Radhika's father says that "Beta, these are norms... adjust" (*One Indian Girl*, 04). This depicts the clear mindset of the bride's family at marriage.

The dress code is one of the main things in the marriage ceremony. Each follows their own traditional suits during the ceremony. When it came to marriage, the girl's side won't care about education. They only prefer to get married their daughter into a wealthy family. If their daughter makes a higher salary than the boy, this may also affect the two families. Radhika's mother states that "Who wants to marry a girl who earns so much" (*One Indian Girl*, 09). Some families in India prefer that girls as only housewives and they aren't allowed to go to work. They thought that the bride would need to be inferior to the groom. Radhika Mehta, who earns a lot from Goldman Sachs, it was a huge salary when compares to the groom Brijesh.

The bride side follows strictly the tradition and norms during the time of the ceremony because their mindset like the groom's family will think that they were uncultured. If the groom makes anything wrong there would be no conflicts anymore, because they are the boy side in the Indian system. At the late-night party, both Radhika and Brijesh wake up so late the next morning, that Radhika's mother states "He's a boy" (*One Indian Girl*, 26). This explains that the inequality system in our society still exists, and shows that boy's side is greater and superior in the marriage system in India.

The pressure for marriage is shown clearly in the life of Radhika. When Radhika is in New York, many times her mother calls her for a marriage proposal. When it come to the Indian context, marriage is more important than a job. In this situation, Radhika lives with Debu. She cannot talk about her life in New York to her mother, because the culture was totally different from here and there. In New York living in a relationship is a common term, but when it came to India the relationship is apart from the culture and tradition. Everyone's culture and norms are superior and pride for them. Even in New York, Debu follows his family tradition and customs. The salary package Radhika was not comforting to Debu, because she earns a lot when compared to him. Even in this modern world, Debu asks Radhika to quit her job and like an Indian couple. It portrays the Indian system of marriage norms in the family as the father goes to work, and the mother is a housewife and takes care of the kids.

In the present scenario, matrimony plays a key role in marriages, where they can update their profile details and choose their life partner. It is an online platform, which provides matrimonial services. This helps the brides and grooms to select their liked person and share their information. In the life of Radhika, matrimony plays a crucial role. In London, Radhika views some profiles on the matrimonial website only for her mother's sake. Some of them were shocked by Radhika's salary. On the website, Radhika found Brijesh and both of them shared their details and information. Matrimony helps people from anywhere in the nation to choose their life partner according to their wishes.

Conclusion

There are many customs and norms in the Indian marriage system. Each family has their own traditions and they do not accept the norms of others. In India, marriage is a prime role among all the family. There are several types of traditions and conventional practices seen in Indian marriages and they are closely connected with their culture. In the modern era, people slowly approve the inter-caste marriages and praise every tradition. The dowry system in Indian marriages still exists and it became one of the elements in marriages. When there is a choice between marriage and education, the parents prefer only marriage to settle their children's lives. There are customs and norms in marriage and in the same way, there are some norms and perceptions towards divorce cases in the current society. In the marriage system, the superior and inferior role is still seen among bride and groom side.

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