

Humour in Chetan Bhagat's 2 States: The Story of My Marriage

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Abstract

Chetan Bhagat, the renowned novelist of 21st century India has written a handful of books that have attained unflinching popularity in India and the world. Though most of his novels have traces of similarity, never do they bore the readers as the plot of Bhagat moves always at a faster pace. His stories often revolve around the usual human passion tamed love though the atmosphere and locale are always different.

2 States: The Story of My Marriage is a novel that deals with the love that happens between two persons from different states. It may not be a new concept as old Hindi movies like Yek duje ke liya had already dealt with the concept. But still the author makes the story quite interesting using the element of humour that is wide spread throughout the novel. Its presence is sensed even from the very beginning of the novel. Humour is a rare element as it is not an easy thing to produce and only writers with immense potentiality can make others laugh. Moreover, the presence of humour energizes the plot of the story and hides the character flaws that are prevalent in the novel.

The beginning of the novel is in the college mess where a young girl berates the mess people for serving some stale items. Krish, another student of IIM watches the proceedings and assumes that she is definitely beautiful by IIMA standards. This comparison in itself is humorous and he says to himself,

“definitely above average. Actually well above average.

Infact, outlier by IIMA standards. (4)

Humour in Chetan Bhagat's novel 2 States: The Story of My Marriage does not have any underlying meaning as it is just witty. It gives the needed punch in the movement of the novel. In the course of the novel, in the introducing part where Krish, the protagonist meets Ananya Swaminathan in the mess, she complains about the standard of food and takes him out for food though the lectures were all set to start in one hour. In the novel, while they were discussing about caste and food issues, she introduces herself as a Tamil Brahmin who never has any non-vegetarian food items. But Krish's introduction is different when he says,

“I am a Punjabi, though I never lived in Punjab. I grew up all in Delhi. And I have no about my caste, but we do eat chicken. And I can digest bad Sambhar better than

Tamil Brahmins.” (7)

The introduction which he gives and the way in which he moves the girl by highlighting his ability to digest bad sambhar better than Tamilians shows the power

of humour the author possesses. It may not be a great joke, but still it provides the needed relief.

Likewise when she tells about the number of proposals she had from IIT guys, it sounds interesting. Even better is her mention about one guy from Chennai who had already proposed marriage to her. These events, though not hilarious, it is certainly lighthearted that gives the needed energy to the movement of the story. Moreover, the author uses these lighthearted comments to attract the attention of the youth. The comment which Krish passes about the guys who had proposed to her is even more interesting. He reports to Ananya's comments when she terms them stupid by saying,

“They are not stupid. They are IITians. They just don't know how to talk to women yet.” (4)

It is not a comment, for it is a defense of his mates. The humorous defence goes on to show how the guys are unable to propose or speak to a girl as they are mostly trained in their subjects than life. Chetan Bhagat uses this humorous statement to show the unifocal approach of the guys in IIT.

As the story proceeds, both Ananya and Krish become very close and intimate which could be noticed in their joint study. Ananya invites him to study in her room and he visits her for the first time. She welcomes him and provides a chair for him to sit and he notices all the sundry things that are found in the room. He notices the presence of many photos, of which she introduces one as her dad. She says,

“That's my dad. He is so cute.” (13)

Krish watches “a middle aged man with neatly combed hair rationed his grin” (13). Here, the readers should notice the language and the role it plays to produce laughter. The author just tries to mock at Ananya father's refusal to smile profusely and the use of the word “ration” makes it very interesting. Krish also notices another photo in what he says,

“In one, Ananya's whole family stood to attention at the beach. You could almost hear the national anthem.” (13)

This is not a light hearted comment, but a humour thought which makes the readers wonder why the family members are standing so stiff in the photo. It shows the mindset of the parents. Either the father or the mother should be very strict or the photographer should have been a bit strict.

Chetan Bhagat's usage of humorous language is extraordinary as mentioned earlier. Here, one more instance to prove the same is in the usage of the expression “IITian embryo”. This usage is directed towards Ananya's brother whose “oiled hair, geeky face and spectacles made him look like an IITian embryo” (14). It makes the readers end up in laughter and pre-tells the features of the young guy. Likewise the comment he reserves for Ananya's mother is even special. He terms her as a person who resembles the strictest teacher he had ever seen and his presence in her daughter's room complicates or makes him jittery. The humour is often contrasted with seriousness and the purpose is not only to entertain the readers but also to highlight the other aspect of the novel. Bhagat uses Krish to underline his familial woes through the humour he displays here.

Though most of the humorous aspects of this novel are found in the verbal play, there are instances where situations are created in such a manner by the author that evokes immediate laughter. A very interesting incident that happens in the ladies' room gives no room for the readers to wonder but laugh. After studying and flirting, he leaves Ananya's room after wishing her 'Good night'. He comes across some sleepless girls in the room moving around with suspicious looks and the reply which he gives to them shoots laughter from every interesting mind. The reply is "I only came to study" (18).

The timing is extraordinary and probably this is the thing that makes Chetan Bhagat a real popular author. He is not an analyser of life nor a philosopher, for him, it is just an entertainment and he ensures that his readers are entertained. Their life goes on in this manner till their college days get over. Somehow both are placed in respective jobs and Krish gets a job in city bank and he opts to work in Chennai. The main purpose of his choice is to woo Ananya's parents. Here the readers laugh heartily as many humorous incidents and usages are brought in by the author for the entertainment and colouring purposes. Though it is impossible to scan every instance of humour, let this article focus on few incidents that may bring out laughter.

On the very first day, his Chief Bala welcomes Krish by sounding "Welcome to the family" (82). Krish was awestruck for he instantly wondered if the guy was related to Ananya. Thus, Krish stayed in Chennai and finally visited Ananya's home. The stern father of Ananya welcomed him in a morose manner and made him sit on a sofa that was very simple and had cushions thinner than in Indian Railways. Krish sat and his father-in-law designate started reading the newspaper and the guy thinks that his whole extended family never had the habit of reading "The Hindu". So each and every humour he pokes at regular intervals makes the desired impact on the readers. The humour that has been highlighted in this article may be mini scale in number but still it showcases the intent of the author who wanted to use it as an effective medium to entertain the readers. As mentioned in the preceding pages, the humour is personality based ones, incident based ones and verbal based ones. The impression of certain persons have been presented by the author in a humorous way while, some incidents evoke utter laughter. But mostly the novel overflows with verbal based humour.

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