

Youthful Aspirations and Familial Expectations: A Critical Study of Postmodern Identity Formation and Negotiation in Chetan Bhagat's *Two States*

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Abstract - The paper critically analyzes the conflict between the youth aspirations and familial expectations in *Two States* by Chetan Bhagat by applying some major postmodern ideas like identity fragmentation, decentering of authority, and breaking of the grand familial meta-narratives. Although most people often refer to the novel as a cross-cultural romance, not enough attention has been paid to how the novel itself deals with the issue of generational negotiation in the framework of the postmodern socio-economic environment. The paper argues that personal ambition and family obligation are not presented as binary oppositions but as sites of continuous negotiation shaped by globalization and cultural hybridity. The close textual analysis shows that the authority of parents is restructured instead of being denied, and is a result of postmodern transformations of strict hierarchy to dialogic negotiation. By situating youth consciousness within postmodern identity formation, the paper offers a novel perspective on intergenerational discourse in contemporary Indian English fiction.

Keywords — Youth Aspirations, Familial Expectations, Postmodern Identity, Generational Negotiation, Cultural Hybridity

I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary India presents a paradox of both the individual and the system to its young generation: it is the very economic liberalism and educational goals that have enabled young Indians to aspire beyond the conditions of their followers that make them all the more bound to their family, to their culture, to the demands of their parents that they cannot change. The novel *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* by Chetan Bhagat (2009) makes the given paradox its primary focus, following the path of Krish Malhotra and Ananya Swaminathan: two young professionals whose personal ambitions, romantic decisions, and modern attitudes clash constantly with the cultural and family set of rules imposed by their families of the North and the South of India. Fundamentally, this novel can be seen as a prolonged discussion of how the aspirations of youth and the demands of family reason, challenge, and eventually change each other within a postmodern Indian society.

Although *Two States* has received significant academic attention as a cross-cultural romance and an examination of regional identity, the way it depicts the conflict between the ambitions of the individual and the duty to the family through a postmodern lens remains underexplored. It is not just a comedy of cultural misunderstanding that the novel is, but a story of how people form themselves in the circumstances of postmodern fragmentation, which means that the great narratives of caste, regional pride, and

parental authority are no longer in any way absolutely valid, but have not gone away completely. According to Udhayakumar, the fiction by Bhagat is always pronounced to respond to postmodern features such as the instability of identities, moral uncertainty, and the dispensation of firm cultural orders (Udhayakumar). These features are conferred by *Two States* in the particular tragedy of the lives of two youths trying to make peace between their dream of love, professional autonomy, and self-direction, and the expectations that their families have ingrained.

The title of this paper: Youthful Aspirations and Familial Expectations, indicates a conflict that this novel will not resolve by either easy victory or easy defeat. Rather, Bhagat offers a postmodern negotiation: the young people do not just reject their families, and they do not just submit to their families. They enter into a dialogue, a dialogue lasting, even painful, even comic, which restructures and does not dismantle familial authority. This reconfiguring is also a postmodern phenomenon, the substitution of the vertical, hierarchical forms of authority by the horizontal, dialogic ones.

This paper pursues the following objectives:

- To analyse how youth aspirations are constructed and constrained by familial expectations in the novel;

- To examine the mechanisms of postmodern identity formation through which Krish and Ananya negotiate their dual obligations;
- To situate the novel's cross-cultural dynamics within a postmodern framework of cultural hybridity and identity fragmentation;
- To investigate how the novel represents the decentring of parental authority; and
- To contribute to critical scholarship on intergenerational negotiation in contemporary Indian English fiction.

The paper is organized as follows: Section II is the review of the relevant critical scholarship, which is linked to the topic of youth aspiration and postmodern identity. Section III gives the socio-cultural and theoretical framework. The fourth section examines how the youth aspirations are constructed in opposition to familial constraints. Section V focuses on cross-cultural conflict as a location of postmodern identity negotiation. Part VI examines how parents are decentred. Section VII looks at postmodern hybridity and how to resolve the tension between the generations. Part VIII is the conclusion of the study.

II. RELATED WORKS

Critical Literature on *Two States* has emerged on a number of productive lines, namely, cross-cultural analysis, postmodern identity theory, youth representation, and socio-cultural contradiction. The current section does a survey of the most important contributions and places the current study in the wider academic discussion, which predicts the theme of youth aspirations and familial expectations as a lens that cuts across all existing critical approaches.

The foundational study of multiculturalism of *Two States* reveals that the novel is a continuation of the study of cultural encounter by Bhagat when Aarthi argues that Bhagat does not oppose North and South differences but rather shows that they are fruitful sources of new hybrid identities (Aarthi). It is also directly pertinent to the aspiration- expectation tension that even the desire of Krish and Ananya to get married across cultures is a manifestation of postmodern youth aspiration, a rejection of the inherited limits of caste and regionalism. The work by Arthi confirms that the novel represents as much a cultural negotiation as romance, which is also the point this paper will expand to the intergenerational aspect.

The cultural contradictions in *Two States*, as studied by Ahlawat, have offered a close reading into how Bhagat uncovers that the mentality of Indian families is stereotypical and how characters such as the mother of Krish repeat the regional disparagement that the new generation of Indian culture faces and must overcome

(Ahlawat). This discussion is specifically relevant to the issue of family expectations: the resistance of parents to cross-cultural marriage is not only personal but also structural, and it is based on the deep-seated cultural narratives that the novel subjects to gentle but persistent critique.

The analysis of the youth aspirations and socio-cultural struggles by Bhatiya and Patil in the stories by Bhagat gives a comprehensive sociological background about the generational conflicts in the *Two States* and states that the young characters of Bhagat are always standing on the boundary between the traditional social order and the new individualistic freedoms (Bhatiya and Patil). This ambivalence is the key to identity formation in the postmodernist world that this paper discusses: Krish and Ananya are neither entirely traditional nor entirely modern, neither entirely obedient nor entirely rebellious, but always caught in the middle between these extremes.

Gaire's study looks closely at the intense balancing act the younger generation faces in *2 States*. On the surface, Krish and Ananya are the definition of modern, highly educated, corporate professionals. They thrive in a globalized, progressive environment. Yet, underneath that modern exterior, they remain deeply tied to traditional Indian family structures. The author points out that instead of taking the easy, ultra-modern way out—like running away to get married—the couple chooses a much harder path. They stay and fight for their parents' approval. This shows a fascinating "dual identity." They use modern patience and corporate-style problem-solving to slowly wear down age-old regional prejudices, proving that being modern doesn't have to mean cutting ties with your roots.

Jadav takes a broader look at how Bhagat captures the changing mindset of young India, using *2 States* as a prime example. The article explores how rapid modernization changes what young people want out of life, especially when it comes to love and career. What makes this study interesting is its focus on emotional growth. Jadav argues that the real story isn't just about cultural clashes or wedding planning; it's about how the pressure of bridging two very different families forces the protagonists to grow up. The struggle itself becomes a rite of passage, shaping them into resilient, mature adults who can handle the complexities of a fast-changing society while keeping their families intact.

In their study on the hegemonic hybrid attitudes in *Two States*, Latha and Mangayarkarasi bring in another concept of cultural hegemony to the discussion, stating that the youth characters of the novel have the dominant cultural norms of their own communities as they internalize and selectively challenge them (Latha and Mangayarkarasi). It is this selective challenge exactly what this paper discusses as a postmodern negotiation that is neither wholesale acceptance nor wholesale rejection of familial authority, but

a strategic interaction that maintains what is valued at the same time challenging what is restrictive.

In *Two States*, Manimala investigates cultural identity by examining how the novel enacts the act of creating and re-creating identity in a multicultural world, in that the characters have to keep on reinventing themselves in the process of shifting between cultural registers (Manimala). This re-invention is a postmodern practice; identity is not predetermined or bestowed but is acted, negotiated, and revised in response to the changing social demands. This framework, in the case of the aspiration-expectation tension, shows how Krish and Ananya need to be different versions of themselves to different audiences: modern professionals to their employers, responsible children to their parents, cosmopolitan lovers to one another.

The approach of modernity in relation to the traditional family values is one of the characteristics of the millennium Indian experience, as Mishra uses the background of Bhagat novels to give a sociological explanation of the pressures that young educated Indian men and women face, with tension between the modern professional ambitions and the family duties being a characteristic of the generation (Mishra). This tension is the direct subject of the present paper, and Mishra's work provides important empirical grounding for what might otherwise remain an abstract theoretical argument.

In *Two States*, the process of multiculturalism is analyzed by Pavani, who states that the novel is the result of bargaining among the conflicting cultural assertions and concludes that Bhagat finally supports a cosmopolitan image of the nation where regional and caste identities would be overcome with the help of love and understanding each other (Pavani). Although this is a generally convincing reading, this paper makes it more complicated by considering how the expectations of families oppose this cosmopolitan vision to produce actual and consistent tensions that do not dissolve easily.

The division of cultural studies by Ryan offers a theoretical language of familiarizing with the power relations inherent in the expectations of the family that the novel presents (Ryan). According to Ryan, cultural authority is never granted by default, but it is always in dispute and reproduced in a certain way because it is achieved through certain social practices and institutional arrangements. In *Two States*, the family functions as precisely such an institution, a site where cultural authority is exercised, contested, and ultimately renegotiated.

According to the analysis of the novel by Sharma, the main themes of the novel are thoroughly explored, and the plot of the cross-cultural marriage is placed in a larger context of the social change in modern India (Sharma). Her work finds particular use in the interpretation of how Bhagat symbolizes the gradual melting away of the

opposition of parents, which the current paper examines and discusses as the postmodern decentering of authority, as opposed to the reversal of power.

The description of the multicultural environment of *Two States* by Singh and Shikha gives an extensive description of the particular cultural divergences, linguistic, culinary, religious, and social, which are the differences that the novel traces between North and South India (Singh and Shikha). Those are not just differences, but the substance of which the expectations of the family are formed, and the dreams of youth are verified. This scholarship underlies the analysis of the cross-cultural conflict as the location of postmodern identity negotiation provided in the paper.

The postmodern analysis of *Two States* by Veni and Ruby is the most theoretically advanced analysis of the novel, in which they claim that the synthesis of two differing cultures in the novel is a postmodern deconstruction of the essentialist cultural identity (Veni and Ruby). This reading offers important theoretical preparation to the current paper that will elaborate on postmodern analysis of cultural synthesis to generational negotiation, discussing how the same deconstructive logic that functions on the bottom of cultural identity level, functions on the bottom of family authority and intergenerational relationship.

According to a comparative analysis of the key themes in *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* and *Two States* by Chaudhari, negotiation of individual desire and social obligation is the thematic concern found in the fiction of Bhagat, which puts *Two States* in the context of a broader pattern of a youth-focused narrative in contemporary Indian English literature (Chaudhari). This comparative perspective reinforces the argument of the present paper that the aspiration-expectation tension in *Two States* is not an isolated phenomenon but a structural feature of Bhagat's novelistic world.

In the combination of these views, it is clear that the topic of cross-cultural dynamics, postmodern identity, and the representation of youth in *Two States* has been reviewed in separate sources, but no relationship has provided a lasting discussion of the aspiration-expectation tension as an area of postmodern identity formation and generational negotiation. This gap has been filled in the present study, which is able to provide an integrated analysis to bring the personal drama of Krish and Ananya to the larger realities of the postmodern situations of contemporary Indian society.

III. SOCIO-CULTURAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The India of *Two States* is the society whose destiny could be termed as productive contradiction: economic liberalization created unprecedented opportunities in the lives of the educated youth, but the social institution of

caste, region, and family has strong demands on the lives of individuals. Krish and Ananya are the products of the elite IIM education, the representatives of the aspirational middle-class in India, but they also live in a world where their career success does not matter compared to the disapproval of their mother and the bias of society. It is against this ambivalent socio-cultural backdrop that a conflict between the youth's desire and family demands should be perceived as an element of tension.

Postmodern theory provides the most productive framework for analyzing this tension. The postmodern condition, as characterized by Udhayakumar in relation to Bhagat's fiction, is defined by the collapse of grand narratives those overarching systems of value and meaning that previously provided stable orientation for individual and collective life (Udhayakumar). The grand narratives of caste purity and local superiority, complete parental authority, are exactly the systems subject to pressure in *Two States*: when Krish is persuaded by his mother that Ananya is an inappropriate bride to her son, the failure of this particular grand narrative is the North Indian cultural superiority that the novel is in relentless gear to demonstrate as untenable and comic.

The postmodern approach to the novel by Veni and Ruby sees this cultural essentialist deconstruction as the main point of success (Veni and Ruby). When Krish observes the city of Chennai and reflects:

"I saw the city. It had the usual Indian elements like autos, packed public buses, hassled traffic cops and tiny shops that sold groceries, fruits, utensils, clothes or novelty. However, it did feel different" (Bhagat, 2009, pp. 77-78)

The narration enacts a postmodern encounter with cultural difference not the threatening otherness of a closed cultural system, but the productive strangeness of a culture that is simultaneously recognizably Indian and distinctly unfamiliar. This difference is not denied by the postmodern subject, but it has to be negotiated and become an identity that can no longer be enclosed in one cultural register.

The cultural studies framework by Ryan used on the family life in the novel illuminates the role of parental power as a cultural hegemony, as a power that is not directly exerted on the family but rather internalized, as the natural and inevitable norms (Ryan). Krish's mother's racist comment:

"These South Indians don't know how to control their daughters. From Hema Malini to Sridevi, all of them trying to catch Punjabi men" (Bhagat, 2009, p. 48)

It is not just a subjective bias but the articulation of a culture-replicated hierarchy of the regions that influences the familial expectations on a structural approach. The young characters not only have to negotiate the personalities of their parents but also the cultural systems in

which the personalities exist. The capitalist and professional aspirations of the young protagonists further complicate this picture. According to Bhatiya and Patil, the characters of youth in *Bhagat* live in the transitional zone between the social structures inherited and those created by the individuals themselves: The self is not provided but has to be constantly built in the process of bargaining with the rival claims and demands (Bhatiya and Patil).

The novel establishes from its opening pages that Krish and Ananya are young people of exceptional ambition, whose aspirations extend far beyond the boundaries of their inherited cultural identities. Krish's desire for Ananya is itself an expression of aspirational identity: he does not simply fall in love with a woman but with a version of selfhood that transcends the limitations of his dysfunctional family background. His humor about romance

"Why would any guy want to be only friends with a girl? It's like agreeing to be near a chocolate cake and never eat it. It's like sitting in a racing car but not driving it. Only wimps do that" (Bhagat, 2009, p. 9)

It captures the confident, irreverent voice of a young man who refuses the constraints of either traditional modesty or familial prescription.

Ananya's aspirations are equally significant. As the novel confirms, it makes her a daring, mentally assertive woman who is not afraid to go against authority, be it the authority of a mess contractor who supplies her with bad food or the authority of cultural norms that would restrict her options. According to Latha and Mangayarkarasi, this is a hegemonic hybrid attitude: the modern professional identity and the selective approach to traditional cultural forms are adopted at the same time (Latha and Mangayarkarasi). Ananya is not merely modern in the Western sense of the word; she is a postmodern subject that exists on more than one cultural register at the same time as she utilizes the resources of any one of them and is not entirely defined by any of them.

The career ambitions of the two characters are closely connected with their personal ones. The need to be close to Ananya's family makes Krish get a job at Citibank Chennai, where he has to place the conventional logic of his career into a secondary position. This is not a mere ambition sacrifice but the postmodern reconstruction of the meaning of ambition: in the case of Krish, success is not merely career success but building an existence that combines love, work, and family in a manner that the traditional career paths do not support. According to Mishra, this integration can be applied to the youthful characters in *Bhagat*, and they always reject the division of professional and personal life as assumed by older generations (Mishra).

But the dream of the young leads is never exactly personal; they are always already shaped by familial expectations that cannot simply be set aside. The fact that

Krish works hard to impress Anaya's parents to organize a concert at the request of her mother, assist her father with the PowerPoint presentation, and make an offer to arrange a grand dinner is a sign of the postmodern understanding that individual aspiration cannot be realized in isolation from social relationships. As he tells Ananya's family:

"I, Krish Malhotra, would like to propose to all of you. Will you marry me?" (Bhagat, 2009, p. 183)

The proposal is addressed not just to Ananya but to her entire family, which enacts the postmodern understanding that identity is relational rather than individual.

The relational aspect of aspiration presented by Chaudhari in his comparative analysis of key themes in the fiction of Bhagat puts such a dimension into a larger pattern in his novelistic world (Chaudhari): his youthful characters always find that their personal aspirations can be fulfilled neither by opposition to, but by the help of their social and familial situations. It is not a conservative ending but a postmodern ending, the abandonment of the modernist illusion of the entirely autonomous self.

IV. YOUTH ASPIRATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY

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V. CROSS CULTURAL CONFLICT AS POSTMODERN IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

The most comic and at the same time the most theoretically dense register of the aspiration-expectation tension in *Two States* is the cross-cultural perspective of this conflict. The conflict between Punjabi and Tamil Brahmin cultural systems is not just a setting of the love story but the major stage on which the postmodern identity negotiation is performed. Every contact between the two families is a contact between rival cultural grand narratives, both of which purport to have absolute truths, which the novel reveals as partial, contingent, and negotiable.

One of the cultural contradictions discussed by Ahlawat in the novel is that the racial and regional bigotry of both families was a manifestation of a cultural essentialism that was systematically dismantled in the novel (Ahlawat) after

Krish faces cultural alienation in Chennai:

"The Tamil font resembles those optical illusion puzzles that give you a headache if you stare at them long enough. Tamil women, all of them, wear flowers in their hair. Tamil men don't believe in pants and wear lungis even in shopping districts" (Bhagat, 2009, pp. 77-78)

The humorous defamiliarization of the familiar itself is a postmodern gesture: it exposes the constructed, contingent nature of cultural norms by subjecting them to the gaze of an outsider who cannot take them for granted.

The comprehensive description of the cultural disparities that Singh and Shikha have charted in the book offers, to an extent, insight into the intensity of the family opposition, which Krish and Anaya have to struggle with (Singh and Shikha). The distinctions are not insignificant; they are language, food, religion, social practice, and basic assumptions regarding gender, family, and decency. By her racist comment on South Indians, Krish's mother is not merely voicing her own prejudice, but replicating a hierarchy of people's system which has strong historical and cultural foundations. The youth characters must negotiate not just their parents' personalities but the entire cultural apparatus those personalities represent.

Pavani's reading of the novel as a cosmopolitan vision of India provides a persuasive account of the ultimate normative status of Bhagat (Pavani): the novel endorses a postmodern cultural hybridity where regional and caste boundaries are overcome by dialogue and mutual understanding. However, this acceptance is not easy, and it has been acquired through a prolonged process of strategic engagement as opposed to mere toleration. Krish's observation:

"She laughed. 'I didn't say I am a practicing, Tamil Brahmin. But you should know that I am born into the purest of pure upper caste communities ever created. What about you, commoner?'" (Bhagat, 2009, p. 7)

It describes the ironic humor with which the novel approaches the cultural hierarchy: Ananya invokes and ridicules her caste pride at the same time, an indication of the ambivalent nature of the postmodern subject in inherited cultural identities.

The cultural identity formation in the novel that Manimala examines is especially pertinent in this case (Manimala): Krish and Ananya have to recreate themselves constantly, as they shift among cultural registers and present various versions of themselves to various audiences. This is the performative aspect of identity that is the primary focus of the postmodern theory, and the novel implements it on a rather sophisticated level. This desire to marry between cultures demands not only the emotional

dedication but the performance of cultural competence, learning to navigate Tamil customs, Punjabi expectations, and the hybrid space of IIM culture simultaneously.

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VII. DECENTERING PARENTAL AUTHORITY: FROM HIERARCHY TO NEGOTIATION

The fact that the parental authority is decentered over time by the strategic engagement of the young characters is one of the most important postmodern aspects of *Two States*. This decentering is not brought about by direct confrontation or rejection but through a prolonged process of negotiation, persuasion, and strategic concession, which reconfigures the terms on which authority is exercised.

The process of decentering starts with the realization of Krish that the opposition of the parents cannot be defeated by the appeal to abstract principles of the freedom of an individual or romantic love. His family history has provided him with a specific understanding of the dynamics of the parental authority:

"I slapped his face once, twice, then I rolled my hand into a fist and punched his face. My father went into a state of shock, he couldn't fight back" (Bhagat, 2009, p. 167)

It is the epitome of a patriarchal hierarchy of authority that Krish has internalized and rejected. His insistence on engaging Ananya's parents by not fighting them and being patient and strategic in trying to reach a compromise with them is a postmodern conception of power: you cannot bring down authority, but something internally based in its own power has to be negotiated again within its own terms.

Bhatiya and Patil identify this strategic engagement as characteristic of Bhagat's youth characters, who navigate socio-cultural pressures not through rebellion but through what might be called postmodern negotiation, the patient, persistent work of persuasion and relationship-building that gradually shifts the terms of engagement (Bhatiya and

Patil). The way Krish arranges a concert with the mother of Ananya and also helps her father in his professional performance, besides his elaborate dinner proposal, is not just a romantic tactic but a manipulation of a system of cultural power, aimed at changing the balance of power in the family sub-negotiation.

The fact that the novel portrays the role of Ananya in decentering the power of the Krish family is also important. By solving the dowry issue during the wedding of Krish's cousin, a crisis that is about to destroy the whole family's celebrations, she displays some level of cultural competence that goes beyond the regional boundaries, where she is not only accepted but also able to use her own wits and her social skills to find a solution to the problem. It is the postmodern resolution to the aspiration-expectation conflict; it is not the victory of the individual aspiration over the expectation of the family, but the renegotiation of the terms of holding expectations and pursuing aspirations.

Ryan's framework of cultural authority illuminates this process: what appears as the softening of parental resistance is in fact the gradual erosion of a cultural hegemony that can no longer sustain itself in the face of changed social conditions (Ryan). The great story of regional chastity and caste endogamy is not refuted but disempowered by the persistent showing that it does not bring about its promised results: happiness, family unity, and professional achievement that it supposedly insures. This dynamic is the exact effect of the postmodern way in which Veni and Ruby read the novel: the integration of the two different cultures is not done by erasing the difference but rather creating a new and hybrid identity through the productive synthesis of the former (Veni and Ruby).

VIII. POSTMODERN HYBRIDITY AND THE RESOLUTION OF GENERATIONAL TENSION

The resolution of the aspiration-expectation dilemma in *Two States* is not the heroic individualism of a young couple escaping their families but the creation of a new hybrid identity that embraces but does not renounce the family and cultural legacy of both main characters. This is a very postmodern solution: it is neither traditional nor modern, but a synthesis of fluidity and negotiation between the two poles, which modifies both.

That Bhagat suggests cultural encounter not as merely conflictual but as productive is answered in the full measure of the novel with Krish and Ananya getting married (Aarthi): it is not a triumph of cosmopolitan individualism over parochial tradition but synthesis, generating something new, a family unit that is neither wholly Punjabi nor wholly Tamil but something generatively hybrid. According to Sharma, the resolution of this novel is indicative of a real process of social change in modern India, where the stiffnesses of regional and caste identity are being softened by the agent of education, movement, and cross-cultural

contact (Sharma).

This resolution is postmodern in the way in which it does not accept any final synthesis. The families do not become homogeneous; the cultural differences do not fade away. The only difference is the framework on which differences are placed: rather than having a hierarchical structure where one culture is superior, and the other one has to be subordinate, the novel suggests a dialogic structure where difference is accepted, negotiated, and eventually embraced. This is what their concept of hegemonic hybridity by Latha and Mangayarkarasi symbolizes, as the youth characters do not just transcend their cultural identities but rather redefine the terms in which their identities impose claims on them (Latha and Mangayarkarasi).

This theoretical argument is empirically grounded on the sociological analysis of youth in the novels of Bhagat by Mishra (Mishra): Krish and Ananya are not unique but are typical. Millions of Indian youth educated in some way or the other work their ways through such tensions between personal ambition and familial demand, and the fact that the novel is so popular indicates that its solution: gradual, tactful, eventually hybrid, finds an echo with a generation that does not need to get out of their families but rather is in need of a new ground out of which they can build a relationship with them. The back cover of the novel, which is made by Bhagat himself, is relevant here: Indian love marriages demand not only the approval of two people but the bargaining of two whole systems of families, a postmodern awareness that individual identity is never already an individual one, but is always already a relational and social one.

IX. CONCLUSION

Two States: The Story of My Marriage is thus a novel of the post-modern condition of the Indian youth in the world: torn between everything that education and globalization can bring about and everything that is imposed on them by their families and cultural backgrounds, yet still holds power despite their lesser authority. Krish and Ananya are not the defiant against their families, but postmodern negotiators who need to devise a way of respecting their personal goals as well as their relationships without disowning, but rather redefining the structures of family that form them.

As it was shown in the paper, the tension between the young ambitions and the parental ones in the novel works on a variety of levels, the personal ambition of the young protagonists, the clash between the North and South Indian family systems, the progressive removal of the parental authority by means of the strategic interaction, and the eventual synthesis of the hybrid identity that does not overcome the cultural difference but integrates it. Each of these registers imposes a specifically postmodern logic: the

abandonment of grand narratives, the adoption of bargained, as opposed to fixed, identities, the acknowledgement that authority has to be renegotiated, not merely toppled.

The contributions of Aarathi, Ahlawat, Bhatiya and Patil, Gaire, Jadav, Latha and Mangayarkarasi, Manimala, Mishra, Pavani, Ryan, Sharma, Singh and Shikha, Veni and Ruby, Chaudhari, and Udhayakumar alone help in outlining the various facets of this postmodern negotiation and the present research has combined these viewpoints into a coherent explanation of intergenerational conflict and conflict resolution in *Two States*. What emerges is a reading of the novel that takes its engagement with the conditions of postmodern Indian life: a world where the old orders of caste, region, and parental authority still have real power, even as they are being progressively, patiently, and fruitfully renegotiated by a generation that does not want to choose between aspiration and belonging.

Future study may elaborate on this study to research how the intergenerational negotiation that Bhagat has prevailed in his writing of novels throughout his novels builds a larger postmodern sociology of Indian family life, or could use more systematic postmodern instructions to base the literary discussion on an explicit philosophical argument. The point that this paper proves is that *Two States* is a work that warrants serious critical attention as a work that dramatizes, with a lot of humor and structural sophistication, the changing and conflictual negotiations between youthful ambition and family expectation in postmodern India.

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