

## India divided over inter-regional marriages: Chetan Bhagat

One of India's bestselling authors Chetan Bhagat feels that non-acceptance of and resistance towards inter-regional or inter-religious marriages in modern India 'shows how divided our country is'.

According to the author, who was here last weekend to promote his latest book '2 States - the story of my marriage', said: 'The refusal to acknowledge inter-regional and inter-religious relationships depicts how divided a nation we are'.

His latest book focuses on a couple who belong to two different regions of the country. The book is inspired by his own personal story. Bhagat is a Punjabi married to a Tamil Brahmin.

The author says the book is about national integration through the medium of inter-regional marriages. 'The book wouldn't have happened if I had not married a South Indian.'

'The book is not about a boy and a girl's love story. It takes only 20 percent effort to meet the girl; the rest, 80 percent of the effort, goes into convincing the parents to marry the girl of your choice.'

However, Bhagat told his fans that the book was not a 'typical love story with troubles', but a book with loads of fun and interesting observation on 'love and marriage'.

The promotion of the book was attended by hundreds of avid readers and was followed by a panel discussion on Indian marriages.

'Even today inter-regional marriages are a big deal,' smiled Bhagat, accompanied by wife Anusha.

'I don't believe India has moved on. I think only 10-15 people have. Inter-regional and religious marriages are the best way to bring national integration,' Bhagat said.

All the panelists, including Bhagat's wife, asked the young audience to follow their hearts.

'Although it was a tough decision to make, we succeeded ultimately. Initially when we were financially not very sound, we had to go through a difficult time, but the problems settled down. Yes, my mother-in-law is still recovering from our decision,' said Tabu, a Muslim married to a Brahmin.

'Stick to what your heart tells you and know exactly what you are up to. One's happiness is more important and once it is achieved, others will come around,' said Harathi Reddy, a successful entrepreneur, and a panelist at the discussion. She is married to a man seven years younger.

An alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi and Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad, Bhagat's debut novel 'Five Point Someone-What not to do at IIT,' which was released in 2004, is a fun-filled look inside the campus of India's most prestigious engineering college. The book made him a popular author overnight.

Thereafter followed his two other bestseller books, 'One Night@ the Call Centre', based on young employees of call centres and 'The Three Mistakes of My Life', a book which looks into the issues of cricket, communalism and politics.

With his simplistic writing and minute observation on daily life, Bhagat's books are popular as they talk about modern India and the challenges faced by youngsters.

Talking about his writing skills, which have often been criticized by experts for being 'too simple', Chetan said he found using simple language which everyone understood most satisfying.

'I was informed that children in Bastar, a remote Naxal infested village in northern India, are reading my book because they find it easy to understand. This makes me most satisfied as I can connect to people this way,' the author said.

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