

**REFLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S  
*REVOLUTION 2020***

**BALAJI B. SHELKE**  
RESEARCH SCHOLAR,  
UNIVERSITY OF MUMBAI,  
MUMBAI (M.S), INDIA.

**Abstract**

*Many novelists of the present period delineated the harsh reality of contemporary Indian society. Chetan Bhagat ,is one among them, who has been acclaimed as one of the best-selling novelists of the popular literature and also known for the real portrayal of Indian youth and their problems, politics and its corruption, love and familial relationship with its gulf, education system with suppression of the students interest, administrative system where people bureaucrats treat people as their slave, Society only with the loss of moral and human values and ethics, etc. The novel is a love story of poor Gopal, intelligent Raghav and beautiful Arati and shows the journey of their life with the problem faced by them. However, these characters are the reflection of today's youth and their conditions in society. And City, Varansi, where story took place is the representation of all Indian cities. The present paper illustrates reality of contemporary modern society with its merits and demerits.*

**Key Words: Revolution 2020, Chetan Bhagat, Modernity, Exploitation, Corruption, Ambition, Alienation, Religious, Political Catastrophes...**

---

## REFLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S *REVOLUTION 2020*

-BALAJI B. SHELKE

### Introduction:

There are very few famous authors, in Indian English writings, whose texts are strongly accepted by the readers in India or abroad. Chetan Bhagat is one of the best authors among them. He brought the fame to Indian English novels by his simple writing which any one can understand effortlessly. He retains the all-round personality as an author, a columnist, a screen writer and a speaker. His writings are mainly about the youth of India, their life, career, love and thought process. Due to his popularity amongst the Indian youth as well the readers, his books became the best sellers in India. *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @ Call Center* (2005), *Three Mistakes of My life* (2008), *2 States* (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), *What Young India Wants* (2012), and *Half Girlfriend* (2014) are his famous books. His writing is about the general thought of an Indian student and his own philosophy of education, goals, success and love as well.

The novel *Revolution 2020* is a love story of poor Gopal, intelligent Raghav and beautiful Arati and set against the background of the city Varanasi. Story of novel is narrated by Gopal as the chief character, in the state of being drunk, recalls his past experiences and events of his life and shares it with the Author, Chetan Bhagat who is on a visit to GangaTechcollege, to deliver a speech. The novel is primarily concerned with Gopal's love for Aarti. It is a story of love, deceit, corruption, moral perversion, success, defeat and sacrifice. All three are class mate and became good friends so long. But after the childhood, in their youth, there came the question of love-triangle. And the story continues with many question related to their career, ambition and love. Though Gopal doesn't have any interest to be an engineer, yet as per his father desire, he has to try to qualify IIT

entrance exam and he works for it. Simultaneously Raghav is also trying to clear that exam. Gopal could not achieve the target but Raghav could. Gopal goes Kota for good tuition though it is hard for his father to pay the fees.

During his stay there he felt his deep love towards Aarti. He tries to talk with Aarti, but Aarti seems less interested into him. He tries to chat with her, he keeps calling her but he could not stop his interest into Aarti. Here Gopal seems struggling with himself in love. He could not find any clue to attract Aarti towards him. On the other hand, Raghav passes in the IIT entrance exam with good marks. He stays in Varanasi and starts college in BHU, the college in the city itself. Aarti attracts towards him while Gopal was away. Gopal is swept off his feet in this mad rush all the time pinning for the love of Aarti and envious of his once best friend's success. From the day, he becomes more ambitious towards his achievement for his love, ie. Aarti. He comes back to Varanasi and his father dies in the shock that his son is unable to get good rank in IIT. Then, Gopal decides somehow to fulfil the dream of his father to be an engineer by selling the land which comes to him as his inheritance. At the time an agent meets Gopal, to whom he talked of his selling the land to the MLA and paying the fees.

However, Gopal's life takes a twist. MLA Mr. Shukla suggests him to open a college at the same place by using his position and power. Gopal agrees with his proposal and decides to use the land for his prosper. They settle the dispute with Gopal's uncle by threats and corruption. The whole college would going to start by the money comes from corruption. Here seems the theme of corruption that they start the college with corrupted money. The college baptizes as Ganga Tech and Gopal becomes the director of it. He fulfils his ambition to be a man of honour and money.

He now could attract Aarti towards him but Aarti is biased towards Raghav because of his skill and cleverness. Guy named Raghav, wants to write and starts the paper named *REVOLUTION 2020* for the development of down trodden and for the sake of truth. While working as a journalist Raghav throws the light on different parts of the cities and it manages to write for the corruption of Shukla, an MLA. The matter rightly focuses on Shukla and he becomes the victim of the condition and party doesn't help him to get rid of the

situation. On the other side, Shuka insisted that Gopal should continue to run the college as a director. The situation occurred that Gopal became the rival to Raghav who was after all responsible for Shukla and exposition of his mal deeds. So Gopal cultivates the harsh side for Raghav and once tries to threaten him and break his printing office. He also somehow manages to attract Aarti towards himself. Both of them, Gopal and Aarti enjoyed sex in a hotel room. But the story ends in twisted manner where Raghav marries with Arati.

### **Familial Situations:**

The novel is symbolic representation of how the children of various families in India suffer while taking their primary education. Parents always force their wishes on children to choose career. Though, Gopal was not clever, his father wishes him to be an engineer. He is mediocre boy and unable to get good rank in the entrance of IIT. This shows the reality of Indian students who always face the entrance exam of AIEEE, NITS and IITS. After failing both the IIT, JEE, NIT and AIEEE, Gopal goes to Kota, for coaching of engineering. Gopal states: "I didn't want to become an engineer. Baba wished to see me as one and that was why I went to JSR." (23) This event reflects the state of countless number of students who are forced to live the dream of their parents, and pursue a career not of their own interest but their parents. Gopal comes under pressure from all the sides, as his father spends all his savings and takes loan from the bank to pay the coaching fee. He said: "I don't have money for that. My father didn't give me any pocket money, and he didn't have much money in his own pocket." (14) When Gopal can't get number in merit he is frustrate to tell because he thinks "Telling your parents you've failed at something is harder than the actual failure." (Bhagat: Rev...:32) Communication between Gopal and his father shows the what is the quality of Indian education now a day with the anxiousness of parents to the children career:

'I'll finish my graduation. Look for a job there should be plenty of opportunities,' Gopal said.

'Who gives a good job to a simple graduate?' Baba said.

Correct a simple graduate meant nothing. (Bhagat: Rev...36)

Raghav is clever but he doesn't wish to be an engineer, only for the happiness of his parents he became an engineer. he talks with Gopal :

'Why BHU?' Gopal asked Raghav,

"I want to do Journalism part-time, I have contacts in newspapers here"  
Raghav said.

'You will give up an IIT for a hobby? Gopal asked.

"It is not a hobby. Journalism is my passion'. 'Why are you doing engineering then? Dad. Why else, oh, I have told him, I am taking BHU because I will get a better branch like computer science". (Bhagat: Rev...40)

After becoming an engineer he starts working as journalism, though he gets good package.

Aarati is from well-educated family who wishes to be an air hostess. It is her dream from her childhood. But her family compel her to the work as guest attendance in a five star hotel. Because her parent thinks she should be with them. It shows the compressed psychology of Indian parents who offer their daughters education but never allow them to choose their career as per their wish. This what exactly Indian family faces and students suffers in their lives.

### **Situations of Love of Youth:**

Novel shows dangling of Aarti's love relationship from Gopal-Raghav-Gopal and finally again Raghav. Aarti is an admiring, alluring, fun loving and physically attractive girl. Gopal finds hard to resist and falls deeply in love with her, In Gopal's speech we get a description of her personality; "However, two years ago when she turned fifteen, the whole school started talking about her. Statements such as the most beautiful girl in Sunbeam school", 'She should be an actress; or 'she can apply for Miss India', became increasingly common. Some of it comes from people trying to please her."

The three are the best of friends in spite of their class differences. They are childhood friends. The novel holds our attention when we come to know about Gopal's love for Aarti almost to the point of madness, and Aarti's relationship with Raghav. It is here that the novel gets gripping, arouses our curiosity and we remain engrossed into the events

of the novel. Gopal believes that getting a good grade in IITS or AIEEEE, would make Aarti fall in love with him. This is the chief reason, that decisions of Gopal fall many levels down, and he uses inappropriate methods to become rich, which is quite masterfully brought out by the author as the story progresses. Gopal wants Aarti to become his, she repeatedly refuses him, and the unrequited love further adds to his frustration.

While Gopal is away in Kota, Aarti and Raghav come close to each other and start dating each other. This outcome of Raghav-Aarti relationship creates tension between Aarti and Gopal's friendship. Gopal gets mentally deranged and heartbroken. Partly due to the unrequited love, Gopal again fails to get the good rank in exams. The shock seems to be too big to his father who dies leaving Gopal an orphan. Gopal enters into a meaningless competition with Raghav, who is not aware of the fact that his childhood friend harbours jealousy against him. Gopal wants to prove Aarti that he is better than Raghav and contrives a plan in his mind to take revenge.

Gopal finally gets what he wants; As he narrates his meeting with Aarti in a hotel room; "We turned to the tv screen. One night Sally was feeling low. Harry comes over to her house. He comforts her. They end up kissing. I don't know if the scene motivated me or the wine or the fact that I felt I might not get another chance. I leaned over to kiss Aarti. She looked up at me in surprise. However she did not protest. Just stared. I kissed her again, this time more insistently. Nothing for two minutes and then she was kissing me back. We kissed again and again. I kissed her lips, her cheeks, her forehead, her nose, her ears and her lips again. I switched off the lights". (Bhagat: Rev...:145) While making love Aarti feels guilty yet can't stop her doing so. Her some sentence with Gopal shows her consciousness:

'This is wrong...'

'Gopal, you realise what is happening?' She said...

'We shouldn't...' she said.

'This is not right...'

'Don't, Gopal...'

'I have a boyfriend...'

'I am not that kind of girl'. (Bhagat: Rev...: 220-221)

Finally, Aarati married with Raghav. This is what today youths love is. They love one and married another without feeling shame. Most of the youth have their pre-marital, extra-marital sexual relationship with their girlfriend or vice versa.

### **Political and Educational Situations of India:**

After the death of his father Gopal wishes to complete degree of an engineering by giving the donation to college, hence he visits education fair. The experience which he gets at there is very terrible. So many colleges were there to do the ads. Representative of these colleges tries to provide their best qualities and pointing out other institutions weakness. It shows the current education system of India where are so many colleges but no students. It is the situation almost in every states of India. Here is the narration of the Gopal's visits to education fair.

'Tell me your budget. I will give you a ten per discount if you sign up right now.'

We want 30% off. Chintumal is that much cheaper'. Sunil Said.(  
Bhagat: Rev...: 114)

They don't even have a building.' Mahesh said...

I will give you the best discount. Don't go to Sri Ganesh and ruin your life. They don't even have labs. Those pictures in the brochure are of another college,' Jyoti said.... (Bhagat: Rev...: 115)

After the visit to education fair Gopal and Sunil take coffee at coffee shop, while having coffee they discuss about opening the new engineering college. Gopal asks his land is agricultural land so how can it be transfer into non-agriculture? Sunil states:

'There are many people in country who are above the law,' Sunil said  
'Who?' I said.

'MLA Shukla-ji'. He said (Bhagat: Rev...:119)

Novel as well as life of Gopal takes twist when he meets to an MLA Shukla who is powerful, influential, and corrupt politician in Varanashi. Gopal and MLA hold a meeting and decide to construct an engineering college on his father's disputed land. Shukla agrees to provide him political and economic support. In the meeting with MLA Shukla, Gopal

questioned about the earning from college. Bedi explain to him that one can earn by so many ways as:

'Well, you take a profit. The trustees can take out cash from the trust, showing it as an expense. Or take some fee in cash, and not account for it. Or ask a contractor to pay back a portion of what you pay them. There are many more ways...'(Bhagat: Rev...: 125)

While taking the permission from the city office Varanashi Nigam for the construction of the college one has to pay the bribe. Officer Sinha asked him fifteen lakhs but after some bargaining they ready on 'Twelve and half done!' said Sinha. (Bhagat: Rev...: 140)These dialogue suggests the reality of every Nigam office of India in each states. Till the Bhumi Poojan he has to take almost two dozen permissions and to that he bribes, 'Seventy two lakhs twenty three thousands and four hundred rupees to obtain from electricity connections for constructions site labour approvals.'(Bhagat: Rev...: 141)

Finally a new engineering college, by the name of "Ganga Tech" is build up and Gopal is made the director of the college. To select faculty Gopal has to pay so much to them. He selects Mr. Shrivastava, who is a retired person and taken his degree from NIT, as a dean. They ready to give his payment half cash and half by cheque. Shrivastava say ,

'Fifty per cent? May be more, 'he suggested. 'it only saves me taxes. And nobody feels jealous of me. In fact my on paper salary will be lower than that of the teachers. (Bhagat: Rev...:157)

For the increasing admission colleges have to pay commission to coaching classes, career fair organisers or whoever helps them to fill up the college. Shrivastava says, 'We give them ten per cent of the fee we take for every admission'. (Bhagat: Rev...:159) when committee of AICTE comes for inspections, organization have to bribe them. When Shrivastava sir said to the committee we will have walk of campus in few seconds, the chairman of the committee Mr. Yadav replies 'Shrivastava sir, why walk around in the heat?' (Bhagat: Rev...: 165) in this way almost every AICTE committee does their inspection. Committee doesn't have the interest in the basic quality of the college, they only needs their packets. The dialogue between Shrivastava sir and Gopal shows the reality of bribery.



'Packets?' Gopal said.

Gopal, do I have to explain it?' this is AICTE.'

Oh', I said you mean the envelopes. Of course, I have them ready

Good. Give it to them after dessert. How much?'

'Two for Yadav, and twenty five for the rest?' I said.

Make it fifty for Bhansali,' Shrivastava said. (Bhagat: Rev...: 165-166)

The incidents shows how the scholars on whom the next generation depends and respectable in society are also tainted. Aarati's father set up Gopal's meeting with the Vice-Chancellor. He said about money as, 'I know how the education business works. Tiwari talks intellectual but he wants his share (Bhagat: Rev...: 170). Raghav presents the scam of construction and Ganga Action Plan in his little paper *Revolution 2020*. Hence, Mr.Rao and his team come to demolish the unauthorised construction. Gopal has to pay the bribe to him around two lakhs. He puts those notes in an empty cement bag, topped up with sand because he has solid reputation.

Only thing that matters to Gopal at this stage in the novel is that he is going to defeat Raghav with money, no matter how it came by hook or by crook. He gets linked up with a local newspaper and starts working with great enthusiasm, fervour and uprightness. He wants to bring about a positive change by his abilities. The character of Aarti is a bit difficult to grasp. She is in a relationship with Raghav, but we see her inclination towards Gopal, when he is a wealthy man.

Raghav joins as a trainee reporter, well approved newspaper "Dainik". He begins his mission against corruption, by writing and publishing a report against Ganga Tech College in which he condemns, criticizes Shukla on the charges of corruption. Shukla, however, quite skilfully, using his power and manages to remove Raghav from his position. This does not stop Raghav's intense fervour to fight corruption. To carry his mission on, he lays foundation of his own newspaper called, 'Revolution 2020'. That's his goal. That India must have a full blown revolution by 2020. Power will be with the youth. We will dismantle the old corrupt system and put a new one in place.

In *Revolution 2020* Raghav brings out the Ganga Action Plan's scam of 25 crores. He motioned '25 crores sanctioned for Dimnapura Sewage Treatment Plant. MLA pockets 20 crores.' (Bhagat: Rev...: 234). He also highlights the situation of water as: 'The presence of fecal coliform, a form of bacteria, should not be more than 2000 units/liter. At the ghats, the fecal coliform levels are 1500000 units/ litre.' (Bhagat: Rev...: 234) This news compels MLA to resign. In the meeting with MLA, CM enquired about this scam. CM also suggests MLA to shut Raghav's mouth up and says, 'Everyone has a price' (Bhagat: Rev...: 239). After the resign MLA admit to Gopal, 'I did his dirty work, disturbing liquor all over the state.' (Bhagat: Rev...: 241) It illustrates India's current corrupt political situations where every party pay the bribe and buy the vote.

Gopal soon realises his mistake. He helps Raghav in getting back his old position, He sorts out things between Raghav and Aarti. In the end of the novel, Gopal says; 'Raghav's contesting. His picture is on election posters all over the city,' Gopal said. 'It could have been you. How do you feel about that?' I said. Gopal shrugged. 'He'll be a better MLA than me. What would I have done? Made more money. With him, there is a chance he could change something.' Gopal seems to be satisfied that Raghav can be an effective politician than him, and can certainly transform, redefine, redesign and reconstruct things for better. These lines of Gopal quoted above, clearly show his development as a character and make him the hero of the novel. He learns from his mistakes and wrong judgements and becomes a better and a more insightful human being. He gains a new perspective on life. He does not regret his decision of giving Raghav a chance and letting Aarti go. He is satisfied over the state of things.

Chetan Bhagat very harshly delineated the current familial, political, and educational with love situations in the novel. If one wish to Indian should develop country then these basic parts must be recovered but it seems impossible. In each and every government office consumers always must have to pay the bribe to do their work. Otherwise work is not done. File remained unprocessed. This administration system can be reform by implementing citizen charter bill or act. Parents should give freedom to ward in their lives to be as per their wish.

**Works Cited:**

- Bhagat, Chetan. *Revolution 2020*. New Delhi: Rupa Publication India Pvt Ltd. 2011, Print
- Ravi Kumar, Book review and analysis- Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020*.
- Solitude of shadows- Impressions; *Revolution 2020* by Chetan Bhagat.
- The New York Times. *Chetan Bhagat*.

**Websites:**

- Wikipedia, 07 Mach, 2015.
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chetan\\_Bhagat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chetan_Bhagat)



Higher Education &  
Research Society