

Search for Idealism in Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020*

B.S.BHARATHI

*Ph.D. Research Scholar
Department of English
C.N. College, Erode*

Dr.T.MANASON

*Head and Associate Professor
Department of English
C.N. College, Erode*

Introduction

The fifth novel of Chetan Bhagat *Revolution 2020* addresses the burning issues of today's India like corruption in public life and rotten education system. The subtitle 'Love, Corruption, Ambition' refers to the predominant themes dealt in the book. This novel also deals with a triangular love as both the male protagonist fall in love with the same girl, their school mate. Here Raghav Kashyap acts as the mouth piece of Chetan Bhagat and craves for an idealistic Indian society. Though he undergoes a lot of pain and suffering, he holds his ambition firmly to achieve an idealistic, corruption free society.

The story is set in the holy city of Varanasi. But some part of the story takes place in Kota, which is generally regarded as coaching capital of India. Although 'Varanasi' or 'Benaras' is one of the oldest cities on earth, people who live there have modern aspirations now due to the emergence of engineering colleges, IT industries and shopping malls on the outskirts of the city.

Bhagat's *Revolution 2020* is the story of three childhood friends- Gopal, Raghav and Aarti who began their life from the same primary school in Varanasi but have different destinies. Gopal is the son of a retired school teacher who has a large debt. Aarti is the beautiful daughter of the District Magistrate who is very honest and granddaughter of a famous political leader. Raghav is an intelligent boy who hails from a middleclass family and the trio are friends. Raghav cracks the JEE with an all India rank of 1123 and proves his intelligence. Gopal is also very passionate to enter into an engineering college and fulfil his dream. But unfortunately he has neither money nor merit to crack the entrance exam. Aarti is

Gopal's love and he fell in love with her from the day he stole a piece of chocolate cake from her tiffin box during the school days. This affair blossoms into love which is followed by innumerable boat rides over the holy waters of Ganga.

All the three friends have different ambitions in their life. Gopal wants financial comfort in life while Raghav yearns for social and political change in the country and Aarti aims to become an airhostess. Raghav joins IIT-BHU not only to become an engineering graduate but to fulfil his long cherished dream to become a journalist and to create a corruption-free society. After his failure in entrance exam, Gopal is forced by his father to join the entrance classes at Kota. But Gopal's mind is filled with the memories of Aarti and is shocked to hear that she had developed an affair with Raghav in his absence.

As Gopal's father cannot bear his son's repeated failures eventually he dies, leaving Gopal in debts. As Gopal has to repay the debts of Rs. 2 lakh, he strikes a deal with MLA Shuklaji to start a private engineering college on the disputed land of his family. Gopal thus becomes the director of the new college-'Ganga Tech' and learns the eventually corrupt ways and crooked ways in the education system.

Once when Gopal, after his father's death desired to seek admission in Sri Ganesh Vinayaka college, says that these colleges are not centres of learning but they are the centres of minting money. Hence Gopal reads out about the fee structure of the college as: "See, tuition fifty thousand, hostel thirty thousand, let's say twenty thousand more for the useless things. They will make you buy. So pay a lakh a year for four years. Average placement is one and a half lakhs. Fuck it. Let's go." (REV2020 113)

Gopal has excess love for Aarti and the magnificent stature of the Ganga Tech college is in no way equal to his abundant love for Aarti. So he goes to the extent of saying to Aarti that: "I will print you a degree if you want, you don't even have to attend classes." (REV 2020 148)

In the process of opening the college, Gopal and MLA Shuklaji find that the process of selection of teachers is a great challenge. So Gopal, in association with Bedi, organizes an interview for the selection of directors and teachers. They decided to visit their houses instead of inviting them to the colleges as three other colleges are opening in the area and they use the commercial terms like 'offer' and 'lure' which suggest that education has become a business.

Corruption exists not only among the directors of the college but also among the teachers who provide service to the students. Mr. Shrivastava demands two lakhs per month as the salary and asks not to disclose his salary to anyone. He also says his on-paper salary will be lower than that of the teachers. The Dean dictates the plan of inspection as: "Right now our focus is on the inspection and then the admissions. Later on, senior students can teach first year students. Happens in many colleges" (REV 2020 158). It makes us think that he is more Mr. Deal than Mr. Dean. Chetan Bhagat calls such technocrats as "Nerds". Shuklaji himself reflects on the hypocrisy of the corrupt system as:

If we had a straightforward and clean system, these professors would open their colleges. Blue chip companies and software firms could open colleges. The system is twisted, they don't want to touch it. That is where we welcome in. (REV 2020 166).

In *Revolution 2020*, Raghav is the mouth piece of the author and searches for an idealistic and corruption free society. When Shuklaji is busy in gathering publicity for his institution through media and newspaper, Raghav publishes an article in the Dainik Newspaper with the headline, "New engineering college opens in city with corruption money" (REV 2020 175). Because of this article, CM cancels his visit to appear on the occasion of inauguration. This article becomes a challenge to the reputation of Ganga Tech Gopal is shocked. He complains Aarti about the extreme hazardous behaviour of Raghav. Gopal's existence becomes a question mark. Aarti stands between the two. Hence Aarti

desperately admits: "All three of us used to be friends in our childhood. What happened?" she said, her eyes filling up. "Life" I said, "Life happened". (REV 2020 184).

Chetan Bhagat mocks that these colleges are flourishing on the ignorance and hard earned money of the poor farmers who are not aware of the crookedness of these institutions. But Gopal is only satisfied with the company of Aarti. They met twice or thrice a week, ate at new restaurants, visited cafes, took walks in the parks and occasionally watched movies.

Raghav exposes another issue of corruption i.e., the illegal constructions that are ruining the beauty of the city. Gopal is shocked to see the headline: "Varanasi Nigam eats, builder cheats" (REV 2020 190). It was another bolt on the relationship of Gopal and Shuklaji. The article says:

Farms are turned into colleges, which then flout all norms to construct as much as possible. Colleges will soon have malls next door. Politicians, meant to protect and prevent all this, are often the culprits. This is not at all, the city has new hotels, residential towers and office buildings where the VNN has taken its cut. We have proof to compare the vast difference between what is allowable and what VNN approved... (REV 2020 191).

Aarti who is a Guest Relationship Manager at the newly opened Ramada Hotel, develops a deep intimacy with Gopal. She also spends time with Raghav who is busy with his social revolution and has no time to spare for her. Gopal succeeds in winning Aarti's body and soul. He immediately rushes to Raghav's office to tell him that Aarti belongs to him and he is a more successful man inspite of his lack of talents and formal education.

Gopal is shocked to visit Raghav's office. He saw a young boy named Keshav who reminds him of his own childhood. He is jealous of Keshav's innocence retained as his being corrupted by the existing society. He also accepts that though Raghav is not financially successful, he is a better human being than him. The scene he saw at Raghav's house transforms Gopal's mind and he decides to sacrifice Aarti for Raghav. So, on Gopal's birthday when Aarti comes to meet and propose Gopal, Gopal pretends to sleep with two call girls to make her believe that he is a man without a character. Shocked Aarti leaves the house and Gopal is satisfied that Raghav will make her happier.

When Raghav is fired off from 'Dainik' Newspaper by MLA Shuklaji's crookedness, he starts his own journal named 'Revolution 2020'. Raghav is not only prophetic but also argumentative and states that:

This has to stop. We have to clean the system.... 'Power is not an apple that falls from a tree into your lap. Power has to be snatched from people who already have it.' We have to start a revolution, a revolution that resets our corrupt system. A system that shifts power back into the hands of the people and treats politicians like workers, no kings. (REV 2020 205).

This novel *Revolution 2020* is also a novel of passions- Gopal's passion for money and status and his love for Aarti; Raghav's passion for a social revolution and Aarti's passion to become an airhostess. *Revolution 2020* is a good attempt to bring to light the corruption deeply rooted in India's education system and highlight the pitfalls of the existing society. Even Chetan Bhagat advises not to take life seriously but to keep the spirit alive:

I have told you three things- reasonable goals, balance and not taking it too seriously but will nurture the spark. However there are four storms in life that will threaten to completely put out the flame. These must be guarded against. These are disappointment, frustration, unfairness and loneliness of purpose

(Bhagat: July 24, 2008)

Raghav's main aim through *Revolution 2020* is to dismantle the old corrupt system and to handle the power of youth. He also has a clear vision that the reformation is required in the small cities where people are ignorant and easy prey to the so called custodians of educational reforms like Shuklaji. He also asserts that students from big cities have decent colleges and get good breaks. The revolution has to start from small city. *Revolution 2020* becomes a voice of transformation of the social system. It has become a voice of radical awareness. According to him power-driven societies resemble animal societies. 'Might is Right' is the rule of the jungle and applies to beasts. And beasts do not progress as humans do.

Revolution 2020 highlights several aspects like corruption in education system, love, ambitions of middle class youth, manipulative journalism, politics, pollution and a strong revolution. Gopal sacrifices Aarti in the end and Raghav is called back to 'Dainik' Newspaper. Though Raghav's press was burnt, his spirit is alive. No revolution is free from the perils of jealousy, violence and unbearable oppositions.

Conclusion

Revolution 2020 is not a novel of mere fantasy but a prophetic vision of society that yearns to be 'corruption-free' and 'idealistic'. Bhagat warns the entire human society that if we don't change, we are going to move towards disaster. There will be a lack of decision making and inefficiency. The younger generation will find the world a difficult place to survive. This cannot be achieved through the efforts of one 'Raghul' in the novel and every citizen of India should be 'Raghul' to clean our corrupt society and make it an ideal one.

References

1. Bhagat, Chetan, *Revolution 2020*, New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Limited, 2011.
2. ---"Speech given at the Orientation Programme for the New Batch of MBA students", symbiosis, Pune, July 24, 2008.
3. Erikson E.H., *Insight and Responsibility*, New York: Norton, 1964.
4. Lyon, David, *Hindustan Times*, July 27, 2009.
5. Richard, M. Ryckman, *Theories of Personality*, America: Wadsworth, 2002.
6. Russel, Bertrand, *Marriage and Morals*, London: Unwint Hymn, 1976.
7. Smart, Barry, "Modern conditions: Postmodern Controversies", London and New York: Routledge 1992.
8. Tom, Forester, "Meta -trends or Mega mistakes: What happened to the Information society" *Computer and society*, 22: 1-4.