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A Critical Review of Chetan Bhagat's "Revolution 2020"

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Abstract

Significantly, best known for their originality and authenticity, the modern, forward-looking Indian writers in English have successfully been able to leave an impact on their foreign readers as well. Without doubt, Chetan Bhagat is one among them. Apart from writing books, Chetan Bhagat is a prominent columnist, and screenwriter. Reviewing the book of one of the best sellers, is entirely a different challenging task which demands the perspective eyes of the concerned author and of course the readers. Being a more commercial, legendary author, Chetan Bhagat writes about India's rising entrepreneurial class and their psychological problems. Based on the "rampant corruption" apparent in the Indian educational system, Chetan has pen figured his fifth novel 'Revolution 2020' in 2011. As the title of the novel suggests, the author has a mind set to bring a change in the arenas of education, politics and the young adult world. This critical review makes an effort to analyse how far the author has succeeded to fabricate a novel which has a remarkable theme of corruption in engineering studies merging with adolescent love.

Keywords: adolescent, authenticity, entrepreneurial, legendary, perspective, rampant corruption

Introduction:

Of the thousands of writers throughout history, a few stand the test of time and become viewed as great. One such Indian icon is Chetan Bhagat who was and is serious about his passion for writing. Being aware, there are thousands of people waiting for his magical combo of words, drama and stories, he left his International investment banking career in 2009 and dedicated his life for writing. Because of connecting with the simple and mediocre people his books are very famous.

After graduating from IIT Delhi in 1995, and IIM Ahmedabad in 1997, Chetan Bhagat began his journey as a writer in 2004 with *Five Point Someone*. Being the biggest-selling English language novelist among the new generation of writers of Indian writings in English, he writes about a mass of people living in highly urbanized settings, enjoying indefinite modern facilities and facing the pressure of hyper fast, competition-oriented life at one and the same time.

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Today, we are living in an age of suffocating stalkers, calling themselves lovers, and when we see such men with a diseased mindset, going to the extent of throwing acid upon their victims of love and at times, even killing their innocent victims, we are simply shocked by the changed semantics of love. The present scenario vindicates the dominance of the love of the body, as the one and only perception of love, over the other anchored fundamentals of romancing. The Platonic love which demands very big sacrifices is slowly vanishing from our day today life.

This article makes an effort to review one of Chetan's broadminded, enlightened, evaluative fiction 'Revolution 2020' sub titled – Love, Corruption, Ambition. Based on the "rampant corruption" apparent in the Indian educational system, the author has pen figured his fifth novel 'Revolution 2020' in 2011. Even though there are thousands of triangle love stories in the ocean of literature for example "*History is all you left me – Adam Silvera, Odd one out – Nic Stone, The Love Interest – Cale Dietrich*" and the like. Obviously, the author's intention isn't mere a triangular love. He has tried to hook up the inter connections among the administration, adoration and aspiration lying on top of the characters he has chosen.

Theme of the Novel:

Taking the uglier side of the Indian Educational System especially in Engineering and Ranks in the Entrance Examination as the theme of Revolution 2020, Chetan Bhagat has ventured to add the flavour of adolescent love and their

ambiguous ambition along with corruption in Indian politics. Bhagat points out the undeniable fact that in our educational system, our main concern is job opportunity and not passion or efficiency. The individuality of an Indian student is simply ignored to meet the need of the family or to satisfy the parent's narcissistic dreams on particular courses. Due to the over crowd in those particular disciplines, there exists the selection processes and entrance exams whereas very many valuable courses go unnoticed.

Against the will and incapability of the students in a particular field, the parents look for prestigious educational institutions in where the seats are limited. Discovering the yearning of the millions of parents' definitely not the students', so many fake educational institutions and coaching centres mushroom everywhere extinguishing the fire of the students. In order to obtain seats by any means, people effortlessly accept corruption.

Chetan Bhagat observes in an interview,

"One can make money..... everybody makes money, but the moment one enters into corrupt mind-set; it has dangerous consequences- especially in education. If there is corruption in education, one ends up with a whole generation that is not trained properly".

Eradication of corruption is the burning problem of the world. Developing countries like India, are facing the problem of corruption in some way or the other but

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today's youths are raising their voices against bribery in all walks of life. Chetan Bhagat in this novel epitomizes contemporary Indian political, educational and economic structures and sub-structures. Dividing and displaying the two mind sets of people, one in which they want to have a place in the global world, and on the other side they do not want to surrender to the system, the author has projected the reality of life.

Besides the stated dominating area, many other aspects of philosophical realities of life which include the young adults' struggle to find meaningfulness, satisfaction and peace in life are there in the novel. The theme, which connects Passion, Business in Education and Politics, looks marvelous in paper but demands higher order thinking skills and insight to stitch a novel.

The story in a gist:

Love Triangle
2 boys, 1 girl
What to do now???
One theory "fight for her,
Make her stay with you"
Now
My theory
(**Chetan's Theory too....**)
"Don't fight for her....Even if
You managed to make her stay with you....
3 hearts will break....
But, if you let her go.....
Only one heart will break.....that's
yours....and
That doesn't matter as long as you Love
her."

- Abhi Singh

The story begins from Sunbeam school, Class – 5 C in Varanasi, introducing the trio, Raghav, Aarti and Gopal with their future vision.

"I've brought puri – aloo, we can share that. It's wrong to steal from others." – Raghav Kashyap (a future Revolutionary) (R 9)

"Fat girls can't become airhostesses. You can eat my tiffin sometimes. Don't take a lot though. And don't take any cake or nice treats." – Aarti Pradhan (Drama Queen) (R16)

"What do you want to be?" Aarti said. I shrugged my shoulders. "A rich man." – Gopal Mishra (The Corrupt young Director of Ganga Tech Engineering College) (R16)

After finishing their schooling, while Raghav followed the footsteps of his IITian father, Gopal performed good enough to become the twelfth man of a cricket team, but not quite player material. Having come from a mediocre Indian family, life played cruel jokes on him at the earlier days. Despite not getting enough rank to be selected for AIEEE, he passed his time aimlessly with Aarti in shopping, chatting and boat riding. Even he expressed his feelings to Aarti but she was very clever not hurrying up any feelings. She considered him a safe zone guy who can chase away her boring atmosphere. Gopal's father, a typical Indian middle class Baba, sent him to Kota for AIEEE coaching. The

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story travels between Kota and Varanasi on phone calls, in online chatting and also in entrance coaching educational hubs.

During Gopal's absence, Aarti falls for Raghav. Aarti and Gopal chat online, and Aarti reveals her relationship to Gopal, who is heartbroken. The complex vortex of tests, classes, selections and preparations is something every insignificant Indian student like Gopal Mishra has to go through to have a shot at a decent life. Instead of bothering about that, Gopal staying in Kota, imagined Aarti at Raghav's place in peals of laughter, his inside burnt. Gopal had a much better shot than the last time yet he didn't cross the borderline. Regrettably he lost his father and became an orphan. In addition, he was in neck deep debt to the local MLA Shukla's men. At the same time, doing his B.Tech at BHU, Raghav paid more attention to his passion, Journalism.

Fortunately, Gopal had a highly valuable fifteen acres land which was in dispute with his uncle. The commission agent Sunil for his ten percent cut introduced him to the local MLA Shukla who was above the law in our country. Gopal and Shukla had a dealing of sharing the land of thirty acres, including his uncle's, between them, on condition that Shukla ought to clear the cases against the disputed land. Shukla having used the age old techniques of politicians brought to an end to the cases within no time. Gopal had run around for three months to obtain the approvals to start the construction of Ganga Tech Engineering College. It was obvious that Gopal wasn't the only guy in India paying bribes. Contrary to Gopal, Raghav

didn't horse trade and lost in university elections for General Secretary.

The contradiction continued between Raghav's Reformistic Principles and Gopal's Immoralistic Attitude to become BIG by any means. A fire brand Raghav worked as a reporter in *Dainic* and brought to the lime light of MLA Shukla's scam of Ganga Action Plan. Shukla made him jobless. Raghav paid less attention to Aarti which fetched Aarti closer to a Young Director of Ganga Tech, Gopal Mishra again. Raghav started his own Newspaper like pamphlet 'Revolution 2020'. This one as well couldn't survive long thanks to the corrupt, dominant politicians.

Realising the fact that everyone has to do their bit for the better and brighter India, as a revolutionary what Gopal does, is the pinnacle.

Major Characters:

Gopal Mishra:

A mediocre Indian insignificant youth Gopal's lifeline holds only on Educational achievement. One stupid exam, half a dozen mistakes in multiple-choice problems, changes his life forever. He competes with Raghav on every damn thing to win the heart of Aarti. "*What I really want is not in Kota, I am leaving it behind in Varanasi.*"(R 24). He was a born lover with a profound compassion for those, whom he loved, and he quite often celebrates the agony of love, in donning the role of a forlorn lover.

There is a lot of self imposed pain in his approach to the delineation of one side platonic love that demands for bigger sacrifices. He occupies the major part of the

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novel with Aarti and his feelings towards her. Ironically, having no clear cut goal like Raghav, from beginning to end, Gopal exhibits an embarrassing side of Indian Educational System and bribery reigning situation in our developing nation.

Raghav Kashyap:

Thanks to his educational accomplishment, a fire brand Raghav appears to be a revolutionary. *“The world has changed. Our college, our city, our country need to change too. Who is going to change them? We are. It starts here. We will shake the world.”*(R 99) Traveling on the path of his father’s choice and diverting to his passion, journalism, he resembles many of the Indian students who are afraid of their circumstances to select their desired career and fail miserably without much support. Suddenly as a reporter, he does some acrobatics which seem beyond his limit which is very difficult to digest.

Aarti Pradhan:

The heroine of the novel, drama queen, flying Aarti who does make Varanasi skip a heartbeat, becomes a kindling factor to the guys Raghav and Gopal. Attracted by Raghav’s educational achievements, Aarti has a crush on him. Simultaneously, she calls for a harmless friend like Gopal to share and care. *Girls have no idea what effect their wavering has on boys.* (R 73) Extremely bamboozled, what she likes is unknown even to God.

MLA Raman Lal Shukla:

The author would have been in a dismal position along with the protagonist

Gopal if MLA Shukla weren’t there in the novel. Being the carbon copy of most of the Indian Politicians, he is calculative and money minded. He shows the perfect combination of politician, businessman and educationist – power, money and respect. Though he utilizes Gopal, he is a friend, philosopher and guide to him. He projects the capabilities of an Indian Politician who can achieve anything by hook or crook. Through his underhanded manipulation, he enjoys his jail life with all the luxuries, like a hotel.

Minor Characters:

Gopal’s father: A stereo typical Indian middle class father who cares much about his son’s career more than him. Being an innocent farmer, not willing to sell the land, the loss of a brother hurt him more than the loss of land. In spite of explaining, ‘Engineering is not everything’, he pushed Gopal even to Kota Coaching shops. *“I told you to study more.”* Which parent doesn’t. (R 32). He died leaving Gopal nothing except the disputed land and loan.

The author has taken a lot of efforts to chisel the other minor characters too. Gopal’s cheating and was cheated uncle-Ghanshyam, a proud Raghav’s father, Phoolchand the boat man friend, the auto driver in Kota, Mr. Soni, the house owner in Kota, Prateek – a quitter friend in Kota, the staff and officers in Kota Educational Factory, commission agent Sunil and many more enthusiastic characters steal our personal attention.

Analysis:

Plot:

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Introducing the childhood friends from 5 C, with their mind sets and status quo, the author has cleverly moved to the adolescent period, omitting the unnecessary parts of their life to the novel. On account of touching the features of adolescence such as the biological growth and development, an undefined status, increased decision making, increased pressure and the search for self, the plot becomes racy. When Gopal fails in his second attempt in AIEEE Rankings in spite of spending a year in Kota educational coaching classes it becomes racier. Since the author has sweated on the other aspects like parents' anxiety, their inability to comprehend the feelings of the ambiguous adolescence, lack of guidance and support, the money minded and calculative attitude of the world around and so on, the novel becomes whole and complete. The inter connections among the subplots of Revolutionary Reporter Raghav, Young Corrupt Director Gopal and Fraudulent Politician Shukla make the novel simply awesome.

Because of too much concentration on the plot structure between Aarti and Gopal, the novel sometimes travels in different direction. Although self-discovery is the story line of the novel, the author has travelled hand in hand with the business prevailed in Educational system in India. He has attained his goal in certain extent yet what reaches our mind is the triangular love among the trio. It is very pathetic that the author has sweated much to elucidate the love feelings of Gopal, the other two haven't paid any attention to that stupid thing. After exemplifying a solution, the novel ends in the form of tragicomedy.

Characterization:

Either the major characters or the minor ones in the novel Revolution 2020, author Bhagat shows the character as he or she moves through the world, allowing the reader to infer the character's qualities from his or her behaviour. Such characteristics in turn make characters seem realistic and also help to drive the action of the plot, as a plot is often defined by the clash of actions and desires of its various characters. The delineation of the characters of Gopal, Raghav, Aarti, Shukla and other minor characters, reveals the insight of the author. Apparently, during the time of writing the novel, the author not only has enjoyed but also lived in each and every character.

Looking through the characters Chetan Bhagat chosen, we will find that these are ordinary people who have normal ambitions in life, experience their first love and consider interesting techniques to win their life partner, or to become successful in life. All his characters portray a bit of everybody and that is why we like what he writes. He simply writes about people and never casts them as heroes or villains.

In many ways, the conventional Gopal overrides the rebellious Raghav, frenziedly it allocates the readers to think in a different way that Gopal seems to be the revolutionary. Apart from the Educational qualification the author hasn't strengthened the character of Raghav to be an acceptable revolutionary. Even the young, corrupt Director of Ganga Tech Gopal doesn't impress us much because his present prestigious position is just a fluke. This

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can't happen to every one of us so we couldn't travel along with him from certain point. In the name of liberty, the female protagonist Aarti goes beyond the Indian societal limit which definitely has demoralized her character.

Style:

The energetic, enthusiastic, expressionistic writing style of Chetan Bhagat undoubtedly has kicked him to be an unbeatable Indian author of the present era. Along with humour, his mesmerizing temperament makes Revolution 2020 pacy furthermore crazy. The inclusion of Psychological feelings like,

"it would be great if he hugged me"
(R 33),

"his greeting seemed like the one you give to people well beneath your stature" (R 39),

"A rusted iron knife jabbed my chest. I fought the pain and typed."
(R 76)

"Dude, don't be so shocked, We, like millions of other students, are the losers in the Great Indian Education Race." (R 107)

make the novel thoroughly serious and thought provoking. The satirical and sardonic moments, though pose the novel light they carry tons of meaning. A few of those cute and mocking sites are really worth noting.

"The Ganga reference worked. Every one believed him." (R 12),

I wanted to tell her not to hold my hand anymore. It is fine at twelve, not at seventeen. Even though, I

liked it more at seventeen than at twelve. (R 22),

Students and teachers strode about in a purposeful manner, as if they were going to launch satellites in space. (R 59),

Parents who donated these dumb genes take the longest time to understand that their child is not Einsteins's clone. (R 82),

Because of Chetan Bhagat's chatty, crispy, punchy eloquent and needless to say his emphatic writing style, the target group of Chetan blindly adore the novel Revolution 2020 beyond the controversial issues which talk about the problems of the whole nation.

The cover Design:

An author at a bookstore is bound to be impressed by the amount of creative energy in all of the book covers and overwhelmed as to how his or her own is going to stand out. One way or another, it's going to have to. It's common knowledge by now that readers shop with their eyes. They look for familiarity but simultaneously yearn for surprise—for something that is new and refreshing. Since the goal of cover design is to sell books, the cover design of Revolution 2020, containing the trio foretelling the love triangle with the city Varanasy background sends romantic vibes. The fascinating cover, being a magnet for the book lovers, communicates that the pages within are worth a reader's time and attention.

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The title of the novel:

Most readers decide whether or not to pick up a book by title alone. In addition to the gorgeous cover design, author Chetan Bhagat has nailed the eye-catching title for his novel, *Revolution 2020- Love. Corruption. Ambition.* His novel's title is his siren call, luring readers to his story despite any obstacle in their way. Despite the price tag and despite what is there in the story, readers flock to his books because he has taken the time to craft the perfect title.

Climax:

Without the epilogue, the climax looks too bare to be accepted by many. It may be the resolution the author might have craved for. Suddenly the uncompromised novel writer Chetan, converted himself into be a cinematic script writer in the climax. Even though the author has given enough stuff to Ragav to become a better MLA than Gopal, the love affairs and a mediocre, insignificant Indian Gopal's aggressive development to the level of the director of an Engineering College, over shadowed the honest and meek character of Raghav. It looks as if in a bit of hurry, the author has concluded the novel.

Conclusion:

Eric Berne has rightly termed that conflictual aspect of the Love Triangle "Lets you and him fight" and considered "The Psychology is essentially feminine." This holds very true to Chetan Bhagat's

novel *Revelation 2020* as well. In Hinduism, Aarti is given to God to make the idol; its ornaments look glittery, shiny and clear in the dark or low light. Likewise, the heroine of the novel Aarti Pradhan becomes a kindling factor to the guys Raghav and Gopal who strive to discover Success, Love and Happiness.

Author Bhagat has beautifully depicted the effect of adolescent love of Gopal towards Aarti which includes sexual attraction, mutual enjoyment, emotional knowing, social compatibility, sensitive consideration, physical affection, friendship feeling and romantic excitement all combining to create a sense of caring, commitment and completeness that make the other person only one for you. They are in one minute on top of the world, next minute in deepest slough of despondency. Even though certain scenes and situations are very vividly described, the book doesn't slow down in pace. Good use of descriptions and extra bits of information about the people of Kota, types of coaching classes and of course the city Varanasy strengthen the plot.

Based on adolescent psychology, the author has taken very sincere efforts to delineate the trio, Raghav – Aarti - Gopal to project the sense of desperate attachment. So the joy of having each other is coupled with the fear of losing each other. And there are conflicts of a painful kind as they wrestle with the issues of freedom and possessiveness, honesty and deception, trust and jealousy, togetherness and separateness, satisfaction and sacrifice. The

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author has also adequately scattered many revolutionary thoughts to justify the title, as follows,

- ✓ We keep regretting, even though there is no point to it. (R 33)
- ✓ A farmer doesn't insult his land. He doesn't sell it either. (R 27)
- ✓ Fortunately, for God's blessings, we don't require a bundle of cash. (R 140)
- ✓ Sometimes life isn't about what you want to do, but what you ought to do. (R 268)
- ✓ Life may not offer you the same chance twice. (R 269)

The ironical portrayal in which Chetan discloses the real picture of how education is sold and his parody on contemporary corruption in politics are praiseworthy. This critical review of Revolution 2020 advocates that being a novelist of inner landscape, his main concerns is the exploration of deep recesses of human psyche, going beyond the skin into the constant struggles raging the souls of human being, at the conscious and sub-conscious level and describing the atmosphere of mind. All his characters are constantly struggling either against individuals, against social environment or even against their own inner selves.

As a result of constantly championing for the downtrodden youngsters who are oppressed or destroyed by icons of administrative authorities, has almost fetched him the cult status. Having an Indian touch, Chetan Bhagat's Revolution 2020 imparts a touch of love, tradition, youth, vigour, emotions, and conversations, and of course a simple and humble human touch in all actions. Chetan mostly concentrates on juveniles, which includes both people who just graduated and those who are just beginning to experience real life and relationships. Regardless of having required information and despite pouring heart and soul, the author has missed the target in a fraction and slipped away the opportunity of vibration among the youth. Moreover, the author is in dilemma on what to revolutionize; Love, Education or Politics. As usual Chetanji's enthralling simple and lucid language style make the novel, Revolution 2020 an unusual, adolescent, psychological EDUTAINMENT.

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