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The Major Themes in Chetan Bhagat's Revolution 2020

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Abstract

Chetan Bhagat has been acclaimed as one of the best-selling novelists of the Indian fiction. He has written about modern Indian youths, Indian society, and realism in his novels. He says that novels are entertainment tools through which one can express his views and opinions about society and the youth. In the modern India human behavior changed into lust, greed, hypocrisy, and hatred and these are the major themes of Bhagat's novels. His novels are incomplete without realistic touch. The background in which Chetan Bhagat has written novels is predominantly of the society in the post globalization era. His novels are based on day-to-day happenings in the Indian society so ultimately he has written the problems of Indian society. He has handled the modern situation in proper manner. One cannot deny the possibility of family conflicts in which Bhagat has described. His characters easily get involved in friendship and love and suffer a lot. He takes upon the sensitive issues which concern to the society in his novels ranging from romantic love story to a shocking condition of the Indian multiculturalism. Chetan Bhagat describes here different themes related to day to day life and society. This paper aims to study the different themes which have been described by the author in the novel.

Keywords: Religious politics, love, ambition, corruption, Indian education system, privatization

INTRODUCTION

Chetan Bhagat is an Indian author, columnist, and speaker. He is the author of ten blockbuster novels, Five Point Someone-What not to do at IIT (2004), One Night @ the Call Center (2005), The 3 Mistakes of My Life (2008), 2 States (2009), Revolution 2020 (2011), Half Girlfriend (2014), One Indian Girl (2016), The Girl In Room 105 (2018), One Arranged Murder (2020) and 400 Days (2021)

and three non-fictions, What Young India Wants (2012), Making India Awesome (2015) and India Positive : New Essays and Selected Columns (2019). All these books have best-seller since their release and some bollywood films like 3 idiots, Hello, Kai Po Che, 2 States and Half Girlfriend took inspiration from these novels. Chetan Bhagat is seen more as a youth icon than just an author. This IIT and IIM-A graduate is making India read like never before.

Chetan Bhagat is a prolific writer. He has discussed several themes in his novel taken from various field of life. His fictional and non-fictional works demonstrate the boundless spirit of the author, which avoids any attempts to map his art into particular fold. In this novel, he explores the avenues of human world, the corruption in Indian politics and educational field, the individual live in particular, from an angle that is marked by originality and newness. He has presented the themes related to the modern India. He has many ideas in his mind, which he presents through the development of themes in his novel. For his novel, he has mostly chosen the themes, which are happening in the contemporary society, particular Indian society. They includes modern education system in India, Indian corrupt political system, problem of students, parents attitude towards their wards, Students' longing for coaching classes, etc. His novel mostly deals with the life and problems of youngsters. Here he stresses on corruption in the educational field. He in his essay, The Business of teaching remarks that corruption in the field of education should not be taken lightly. He says:

You don't need to be an expert to realize that what is happening is seriously wrong. However, policymakers are doing little about it. Perhaps much like the bootlegging industry, so many regulators and inspectors are making money that nobody wants to fix

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it. However, corruption in the education sector is not to be taken lightly. When you have corruption in infrastructure, you have pot-holed roads. When you have corruption in education, you have pot-holed minds. We are destroying an entire generation by not giving it access to the world-class education it deserves.

The Revolution 2020 is a critical novel on corruption in Indian education system and coaching classes for competitive exams in India. The novel is set during the first decade of twenty first century. In it, Bhagat focuses on the trend of coaching classes to get selected into India's top most colleges. Bhagat has shared his experiences, which he got from different parts of India. Speaking about the plot, story, and characters, Bhagat gives credit to "his extensive journey of India that takes place to deliver motivational speeches across the country". Gopal represents lower middle class family, Raghav, middle class family and Aarti, upper class family. Thus, this core group of characters presents a Metro society from the filthy rich to the marginalized poor, so each class of the readers can somehow empathies with the lead actors. This widening of the base shows Chetan Bhagat's sheer brilliance in planning and executing his attempt to create a best-seller. He has adopted the tradition of realist and some parts of the novel seem realistic making the narrative comic.

The life of students at Kota is very hard. They spend a lot of hours on study. The realistic theme of students' life is given here. Bhagat writes about a day in the life of aspiring students in Kota:

I could call myself a true Kota-ite a month into moving there. Like thousands of other students, my life now had a rhythm. Career Path resembled a school, but without the fun bits. Nobody made noise in class, played pranks on one another or thought of bunking classes. After all, everyone had come here by choice and had

paid a big price to be here ... I hated the brutal Career Path schedule at first. Lectures started at two in afternoon and went on until nine in evening. After that students rushed home to eat dinner, and do the 'daily practice sheets', a set of ten problems based on the current lesson ... I went along with madness, not so much because of the zeal to prepare, but more because I wanted to keep myself busy. I didn't want Kota's loneliness to kill me.

The novel is an ambitious with a bunch of characters and themes, set in Indian city. The story moves from Varanasi to Kota and again to Varanasi. Moving from place to place, Bhagat's characters keep floating in the novel and do not stick to one incident. They keep achieving their goals, trying to link up plot of the novel but too little avail. Bhagat has tried to reveal the mind of his characters. Love triangle is one of the major themes in the novel. Gopal, Raghav and Aarti are friends since their childhood. Aarti cares more of Gopal since she comes to know latter's mother was died. Aarti loves Raghav.

Title of the novel, 'Revolution 2020' itself suggests the revolution, which might have started in 2020. Bhagat's views are similar to Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Dr Kalam used to say that India would become one of the developed nations by 2020. Unless and until corruption ends, no country can makes progress. Bhagat is agreed with Dr Kalam's vision. The author in the novel has given minute details of corruption in Indian politics, administrative, and educational system. Corruption has burrowed Indian political, social, and educational system. Talking about corruption Chetan Bhagat says:

In India, one question is constant: why isn't corruption going away? The question baffles the educated middle classes. Why is a reasonable, universal and noble demand for an honest society so difficult to achieve in a democracy? And

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why is it that corrupt parties win election time and time again.

Every Indian citizen is struggling to get rid from corruption. In India, political systems and political leaders are responsible for it. Students are coming together and demanding freedom from such social evils. Bhagat says:

When the roof of the house is leaky, you need to fix the roof first rather than fight family feuds. We do become one during cricket matches, and we did win the World Cup 2011. If we can become one on this issue of fighting corruption, we will be able to win against it as well.

MLA Shukla is a political leader and most corrupt man of Varanasi who pockets 20 crore from Dimnapura Sewage treatment Plant. In his earlier days, he was poor man and used to sleep at railways station. His family lives in foreign country. Raghav is the protagonist who fights with corruption and wants India as the corruption free country. Corruption not only made hole in Indian political system but has also spread in educational system. An excerpt shows the conversation between Dean and Gopal about giving bribe to team members:

‘Good. And the packets?’

‘Packet?’

‘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 each for the rest?’ I said

‘Make it fifty for Bhansali’, Shrivastava said

Gopal tells Shukla, “We have paid bribes to at least thirty people in this room”. After listening Gopal’s comment Shukla tells the reality in the field of education in India:

If we had a straightforward and clean system, these professors would have opened their own 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 come in

Indian parents are extra careful about the future of their children. Gopal’s father wants his son to be an engineer from India’s top most colleges. His father is a retired teacher and involved in a court case against his elder brother. Gopal in his first attempt for AIEEE fails to score the required marks. After getting known Gopal’s low score his father does not talk properly with him. Gopal tells his father that he wants to do B.Sc. His father cannot control his anger and says Gopal, “who gives a good job to a simple graduate”. Prateek is also one of AIEEE and JEE aspirants who wastes his years at Kota. He was preparing for the exams since last two years but unable to get passed. His parents are teacher who without seeing their son’s ability send him to Kota. He tells Gopal, “Most of us can’t crack these tests, basic probability. But who will drill it into our parents’ head?” Raghav’s father is not interested in NIT and tells his son to do engineering from IIT. The hopes of Indian parents are bigger than their children.

Family, conflict is one of the best themes, which Bhagat has been describing in his novels since his first novel. Modern Indian culture and family conflicts are an inseparable part in Bhagat’s novels. Gopal’s father and Ghanshyam-ji are two brothers who are fighting court case for their disputed land. Ghanshyam-ji wants full possession on his father’s land by paying less money to Gopal’s father. Bhagat depicts the cause of conflict between two brothers, which seems realistic with respect to village life. He says:

Ghanshyam taya-ji, my father’s respected elder brother, had screwed us. My grandfather had left his two sons thirty acres of agricultural land on the Lucknow highway, to be divided equally. Soon after my grandfather’s death, Ghanshyam uncle took a loan from the bank and mortgaged baba’s half of the property, forging the papers with wrong plot numbers and bribing the bank officers. Ghanshyam taya-ji made bad business decision and lost the money. The bank sent a foreclosure notice to us. Baba protested, and the bank slapped cases on both my father and uncle. The two brother slapped cases on each other

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Bhagat has given the real picture of the pitiful condition of today's private colleges. At Career fair, Gopal sees a dean of college who is pursuing the students to take admission in his college by offering them huge discount. People like politicians, beedi-makers, and builders open the colleges. Gopal goes on the counter of Jyoti Verma who offers ten percent discount, his brother who has also opened the college offers thirty percent discount. To lure the students towards them they tell them each other's deficiencies. Jyoti Verma tells Gopal, "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".

Bhagat makes Raghav's character as one of the most idealistic characters among his all the characters as he has put his own views through this character. Raghav in the novel plays the role of an activist who wants to bring change in Indian society by eradicating the corruption. He for the sake of society declines his job offer of Infosys and joins as a reporter at newspaper agency. Even his girlfriend, Aarti, his parents, and MLA Shukla do not stop him by giving service to society. His inner desire does not keep him quiet so he starts his own newspaper, Revolution 2020. During the Anna movement at Ramlila Bagh Delhi, this book acted as an inspiration to many college students who later participated in the movement. A report from Times of India states:

Shashi Shekhar Singh, a civil engineer student from IIT Kharagpur, supporting Anna's anticorruption campaign was far more important than getting his M.Tech degree at the 57th Convocation at his alma matter from chief guest, PM Manmohan Singh on Monday. That's why this IITian didn't mind giving the convocation a miss. Even though he was in Kharagpur, he thought better to utilize the events as a means to spread the word and express his solidarity towards Anna's campaign.

The history of Varanasi, a holy land, is told here. It is one of the old holy places in world. People all over the world visit there to take God's blessing. Bhagat tells the city is divided into different ghats, according to their mythological stories. Manikarnika Ghat is the place where dead bodies are burnt. About this ghat Bhagat tells, "It

named after Shiva's earring that he dropped here during a dance, is considered a holiest place for cremation". Harishchandra Ghat is named after the king Harishchandra where electric cremation is done. In Varanasi, many foreigners come to see funeral fire. It becomes a touristic place for them. Over forty five thousand bodies are burnt in a year. People's belief in Hindu mythology takes them to Varanasi. Bhagat says:

Dying in Kashi leads to liberation. Hindus believe that if they die here, there is an automatic upgrade to heaven, no matter what the sin committed on earth. It is amazing how god provides this wild card at death, which in turn allow my city to earn a living.

The story of the Gopal revolves around the word 'college'. Gopal in the beginning of his life struggles to get admission in an engineering 'college' due to his low score at exam. His father sends him to Kota for coaching classes so that he might be selected easily into government 'college'. He does hard study but fails and reduces his chances of getting selected in government 'college'. Vineet, a boy from Varanasi tells him to join private 'college'. Gopal visits at Career Fair. At Career Fair due to high donation fees at private 'college', he cannot take admission there. He meets MLA Shukla and with his help opens an engineering 'college' where he gives an admission to students in his own 'college'. The proverb, 'rag to riches' is applicable to Gopal. He is the man who in his early life could not get admission in engineering colleges due to lack of money and now the same man gives admission to students in his college.

The novel testifies some of the personal experiences, relations, memories, and historical processes. This process of testing is achieved by juxtaposition of silence with power of communication, and of experimental realities with Gopal and his father. The pathetic situation in finding oneself beyond or below the categorized parameters throws into relief some seemingly undefined and unreal conditions. The novelist approaches this incongruous element from different angles by applying different frames of reference covering different areas of human experience. The thematic study of 'Revolution 2020' indicates Chetan Bhagat's intense desire of India as

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a corruption free country. It would be more facile to contemplate that Chetan Bhagat in his novel has attempted to inscribe a simple movement against corruption. It would be more appropriate to recognize that he has contrived to introduce a maze of ideas criss - crossing each other to project the profound meaning and mystery of life through a visibly insignificant event. The intricate relationship of time, place and characters, often mind –boggling, propels the reader to embark on a journey of an uncircumscribed domain of the past, present and future. The thematic originality and complexity bewilders the reader but a scrutiny discloses that like his earlier novels, Bhagat in the novel has universalized the real happenings in the Indian society. The verbal felicity of the engrossing novel ‘Revolution 2020’ moves with a rapid pace and often makes one forgetful of the indecision of time and place that separates and yet cements the major characters of the novel. The constant shifting from one events to another in cinematic technique enable one to visualize a sequence in actions. The co-mingling of realism through the character of Raghav and romanticism, through Gopal and Aarti demonstrates the extraordinary but eternal continuity of life. The corruption in India at each stage is unfolded through a compressed, repetitive movement of incidents, contextually different, to allow a zigzag motion through ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’. This quality permits Chetan Bhagat to experiment with vision mixing. The realistic and detailed picture of different Ghats, lanes, temples suddenly dissolves into the mysterious world of Gopal and Aarti. Raghav collects praise from readers as he tries to present the truth of Indian society.

On the face of it novel is about love, ambition, and corruption. Out of it, realistic theme of corruption is told through the character of Raghav. In India, government tried to eradicate corruption from politics and administrative level by making laws but failed. It is one of the reasons why the story of Raghav evokes at once

fascination and sense of regret in our minds. We wonder whether these mixed feelings had stirred the imagination of Chetan Bhagat and inspired him to write Raghav’s hatred for corruption at this period when other issues top the list of recent problems.

CONCLUSION

Thus, Chetan Bhagat in his novel, Revolution 2020 has tried to present the realistic themes. Chetan Bhagat has tried to cover all the themes related with the society. The main characters like Gopal, Raghav and Aarti represent the characters which we can find in our society. All the themes are described in beautiful and realistic manners. Bhagat is successful in making the reader happy. New readers who don’t know the literary language can also enjoy the writing style of Chetan Bhagat. The author has succeeded here in describing all the things in beautiful manner. He has also succeeded in keeping the readers stick to novel up to at the end.

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