

Aspirations and Frustrations in Chetan Bhagat's Novel "Revolution 2020"

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ABSTRACT: *Revolution 2020 is Chetan Bhagat's fifth novel and addresses some burning issues of India today, like the rotten education system and corruption in public life. All the three principal characters have strong ambitions in life, and how they try to fulfill them constitutes a bigger part of the novel. The novel is a thought provoking that sheds light on the realities of education system of India. The story is set mostly in the holy city of Varanasi except a few parts which place in Kota. After reading, the reader finds out that how a middle-class family struggle to get education and to get success in their life. It exposes the relevant social issues of Indian society. The city and the name of the characters look sometime holy that is used by the novelist Chetan Bhagat in the novel. The city Varanasi is a city of temple which is situated near the river, Ganga. People who live in Varanasi now have modern aspirations which are evinced by the mushrooming engineering colleges, IT industries and shopping malls on the outskirts of the city. It is this contrast between antiquity and modernity, holiness and growing corruption that is sought to be highlighted in the novel.*

Keywords: *Social realism, ambition, corruption, frustration.*

Chetan Bhagat with his five celebrated novels changed the current of Indian English fiction and inaugurated a new era of Indian expose the realities of life of young technocrats working with multiplexes in the IT Hub like Bangalore, Delhi and Ahmedabad. His novels are: Five Point Someone (2004), One Night @ the Call Centre (2006), The 3 Mistakes of My Life (2008), 2 states: The Story of My Marriage (2009), Revolution 2020 (2011), Half Girlfriend (2014) and One Indian Girl (2016). He also wrote series; The Girl in Room 105 (2018), One Arranged Murder (2020) and 400 Days (2021). Chetan Bhagat's novels have remained bestsellers since their release. His many novels have been adapted into major Bollywood movies. The Guardian writes about Chetan Bhagat that "India's paperback king". He also tries his hand as a

motivational speaker. For devoting his all time to writing, he relinquished his international investment banking career. The novel begins with prologue and ends with epilogue. It consists of 42 small chapters. The present research paper deals with aspirations and frustration in Chetan Bhagat's novel Revolution 2020. The paper also focuses on the post-modern aspects in the novel. The paper significantly sheds light on the present issues, youth desires, political issues, education system, love and corruption. The novel generally focuses on three main issues of the modern times; love, corruption and ambition. The novel criticizes how private coaching classes for courses such as IIT JEE exploit aspiring students. Indian parents put their hope and desires on relying these private coaching classes that's why their children can crack tests and they bring change the fortune of their middle-class family. The novel explores the reality of the private coaching industry which thrives on corruption, scams and many other kinds of criminal activities. Ambitions or aspirations of youth is the important theme that the novelist has handled in the present novel.

The story is set mostly in the holy city of Varanasi except a few parts which take place in Kota, generally regarded as the coaching capital of India. It is basically about the three aspirations IIT students. The three friends cherish their own ambitions in life. Gopal seeks financial wealth and comfort in life; Gopal wants to become rich man by opening an engineering college. Aarti aspires to become an airhostess and fly like birds in the sky. Raghav wants to bring social and political change in the country. Raghav aspires for his desire that he wants to be social reformer. His aspirations to change the world through social reformation and movement. He wants to see the society as a corruption free society. He thinks that his article on Ganga cleaning scam brings somewhat changes in the political system. Raghav joins IT-BHU not

merely to earn a degree in engineering but also to fulfill his ambition to usher in a corruption free society as a journalist. The novel narrates the story of two friends Gopal and Raghav both of them love the same girl. According to Dr. Beena Agarwal, “Revolution 2020 is the exploration of the life and consciousness of two friends; Raghav and Gopal who have a common girl friend Aarti, endowed with all feminine delicacy and sensibility.”(114-115) The two friends are very ambitious. Gopal Mishra belongs to the middle-class family but he falls in love of upper-class family girl Aarti. In the very beginning of the novel Aarti and Gopal love to each other but in the middle of the story, she was attracted towards Raghav who has cracked IIT JEE exam in his first attempt. But he does not want to do engineering. He wants to be journalist. Raghav said that “It is not a hobby. Journalism is my passion (Bhagat, 40).” Raghav attempts to change the world through his first article published in newspaper: What do you say about a society whose top leaders are the biggest crook? What do you do in a system where almost anyone with power is corrupt? India has suffered enough. From childhood we are told India is a poor country. Why? There are countries in this world where an average person makes more than fifty times that an average Indian makes. Fifty times? Are their people really fifty times more capable than us? Does an Indian farmer not work hard? Does an Indian student not study? do we not want to do well? Why, why are we then doomed to be poor? (Bhagat, 205) Raghav wants to change Indian society. He thinks that one day his articles would bring change in Indian political system, in private coaching institutions as well as in private colleges. Many private colleges’ owners have no degree in the respective fields but they opened colleges and earned large amount from their institutions. So, he decides to work as a journalist to remove corruption from the society. Gopal Mishra belongs to the middle-class family. His father saved some money for his son’s study but Gopal does not success in his first attempt in AIEE exam. His father wants to send him Kota for second attempt. But he wants to take admission in plain B.Sc. Gopal went to Kota and searched many coaching but their fee was very high. His father sent him all money who saved for his old age and for his illness. Gopal did not get good position in his second attempt. He expressed his experience about his JEE exam:

I had a good start. I solved the first few problems with relative ease. The middle became tough. Some questions belonged to chapters taught during my drunken and depressed phase in Kota. I got stuck on one problem. I thought I could solve it, became possessed, and wasted ten minutes. I suppose.....The examiner snatched my paper away even as I begged him to let me write one last answer. Leaving that one question could cost me five hundred ranks, but... the JEE had ended! (Bhagat, 91)

Due to frustration in love and the concomitant emotional difficulties, Gopal takes to boozing and develops other problematic habits and consequently he fails again to crack the AIEEE. Gopal’s old father cannot bear the repeated failures of his son and eventually dies, leaving him an orphan. He returned home and with the help of MLA Shukla, he opened his own Ganga Tech Engineering college. Newspapers headline said, “New engineering college opens in the city- with corruption money?” (Bhagat, 175). Further the few lines seemed harmless; The city of Varanasi, also called the City of Learning, can boast of another engineering college of its own. The GangaTech College of Engineering, set in a fifteen- acre campus on the Lucknow Highway, opens its gates for admissions this weekend. (Bhagat, 175) Gopal frustrated after reading newspaper’s headline. His aspirations to become rich in his life. So, he chose to open a college with the help of MLA. In India, there are many owners of private institutions, they don’t have the degree in the respective field but they open colleges and run them. Gopal gave many white envelopes to officials. But there is no other choice. Raghav is a journalist who exposes the corruption-funded college. He was eventually departed from the newspaper’s house. Raghav begins his own newspaper, Revolution 2020 through this he wants to change the world. By Revolution 2020, he tries to expose the corruption system in India. Raghav publishes an article about the Ganga water treatment scam which proves beyond doubt that Shukla is a corrupt politician who loots public funds. The MLA is forced to resign and arrested by the police. After another expose, the newspaper of Raghav was shut down by thugs and politicians, and he lost almost everything in his life. He is very passionate about his

activism, that's why he forgets his love, Aarti. Gopal unknowingly helps Raghav to get a job. Gopal suggests him to become a politician (MLA) to bring about the revolution. Thereafter, Raghav and Aarti got married. Chetan elaborates the social evils, political issues, corruption and problems of youth generation through this present novel. The novel mainly focused on love, corruption and ambition. He illustrated the theme of love with different attitudes and shades. While knowing about the relationship between Aarti and Gopal, the readers came to know that they are good friends. Due to Gopal's academic failure Aarti left abandon him and goes with Raghav who is a very sharp and brilliant IIT student. In the end of the novel, Gopal came to know the reality of life so he decides to leave Aarti and helps to Raghav in his mission. He understood that Aarti is the best match of Raghav only. Hence, he hires two prostitutes with the help of MLA and Aarti is the only eyewitness of this incident. Aarti goes back to Raghav. The novelist presented here the theme of platonic love. The research paper focused on the theme of social issues, realism, it also highlights on social evils and unfair practices. The deals with the aspirations of youth, and the problem of employability, youths struggled for their ambitions, job fairs and the scenario of the private coaching institutions. Chetan Bhagat applied metaphorical language to suggest that strong determination, sincere persistence, earnest attachment, courageous initiative and ardent commitment are the key ingredients for securing success in life.

Revolution 2020 is a laudable attempt to bring to the force the corruption deeply rooted in India's education system and highlight the anomaly of non-profit organizations and blatant commercialization of education. Revolution 2020, like several other novels of Chetan Bhagat explores the compulsions of the various dimensions of passions. Passions are passions and they can never be a part of the reality of life. Gopal is lost both ways. Ganga Tech becomes an intoxication, an artificial intoxication to redeem the suffering of life. While Aarti, the emblem of love, separates and joins Raghav. Aarti's association with Raghav is the worst tragedy of his life. Gopal looking at Aarti as a bride of Raghav, almost comes in a state of depression. He is baffled, shattered and confused and comes almost in a state

of nervous breakdown. He cries out, "Get me out of here, I broke down completely" Bhagat (293).

Chetan Bhagat's Revolution 2020 is not a fantasy but a prophetic vision of life from the horrible shadows of corruption and filthy passion. The fictional art of Chetan Bhagat has become a class in itself and it has given a new direction to the stream of Indian English fiction to be more lively, committed and focused at the reorientation of the social system. The writer has successfully depicted bribery in political system, social disparity, suffering, frustration, inferiority and black misery hidden behind the global, glittering urban spectacle. Ghosh & Dhawan (229)

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