

DECODING AMBITION AND CORRUPTION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CHETAN BHAGAT'S *REVOLUTION 2020*

Sarmistha Das

E mail id: sarmidas57@gmail.com

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Abstract

Revolution 2020 by Chetan Bhagat intertwines themes of ambition, love, and societal corruption against the backdrop of modern India's educational sector. Through the personal and ideological conflicts of three friends in Varanasi, Bhagat explores how young aspirations are manipulated by systemic corruption influenced by privatization and political interference. This analysis examines the narrative's depiction of corruption's impact on the moral and ethical decline in education and its reverberations through the lives of the youth. By focusing on the protagonist Gopal's internal and relational dynamics, the paper reveals how personal failings and societal pressures converge to shape individual destinies and broader social conditions.

Keywords: Chetan Bhagat, *Revolution 2020*, corruption, Indian education system, privatization, youth aspirations, societal norms, love triangle, moral decline.

Introduction

"I am a motivational speaker now and travel around the country. As part of that, I visited several small colleges and noticed the rampant corruption in the education sector. I thought this affects millions of youth so I should do something about it. Hence, *Revolution 2020* was born - Chetan Bhagat. [114]"

Chetan Bhagat's spontaneous ideas and thoughts portrayed in another work the socio-cultural, political, and widespread corruption in society in a realistic way. To top it all off, he brings attention to the problems with the education system, arguing that privatisation of schools inevitably leads to a decline in students' and teachers' moral and ethical standards. Through the symbolic characters, Bhagat seeks to bring attention to the underlying causes of these intolerable situations, such as corrupt attitudes in certain sectors, rude politics, power abuse, dominance, inhumanity, the disintegration of social norms, economic inequality, and, most importantly, a total lack of understanding of human relationships. With sensitivity and shame intermingled with desires, aspirations, regrets, and life philosophy, the repercussions are vividly shown.

"The way different characters and situations are developed by novelists against complex socio-cultural practices offers the readers an opportunity to see people and social institutions in an interactive mode. Whether it is the characters that bring in even a shade of change in the social practices or the social practices which facilitate or thwart the free growth of human personality avenues for social criticism are opened. [115]"

The book *Revolution 2020* explores the themes of adolescent aspirations, sacrifice, and the impact of politics on these themes. It also delves into the ways in which corrupt individuals prey on the hopes and dreams of young people. With the local politics of the sacred city of Varanasi serving as a background, Chetan Bhagat tells the tale. Chetan Bhagat's articles and writings serve as the source material for *Revolution 2020*'s narrative. He claims it's not a political book but rather a love narrative that, despite appearances, highlights societal corruption tendencies.

Rupa Publications, New Delhi, released Chetan Bhagat's fifth book, *Revolution 2020*, in 2011. A love triangle, unchecked corruption, and the aspirations of young people are the central themes of this narrative. The term alludes to the youth's revolutionary zeal and their desire to change society from corrupt to trustworthy and from certain immoral to moral. By capitalising the letters in "Revolution2020," he symbolises the overarching plot point; drawing inspiration from a love tale, he hopes to inspire young people to follow their dreams. As is his normal practice, Bhagat uses *Revolution 2020* to try to highlight the young voice in opposition to society's unjust patterns via clear depiction. Our nation's raw truth is exposed in the book. "Literary critics typically have a negative impression of his books, but Mr. Bhagat has accepted the criticism." [116]

Themes of love and hatred, corruption, India's flawed educational system (via privatisation), ambition, and philosophy of life are central to *Revolution 2020*, Bhagat's attempt to depict the country's real predicament. *Revolution 2020*'s storyline is comprised of a prologue, the novel's tale told in flashback, and an epilogue. Seven Years Later, Kota, Varanasi, and Varanasi Three More Years Later make up the protagonist's life's following narrative and the story's subplot. The setting, a village in India known for its temples and Ghats, as well as the novel's

central themes—a love triangle, local politics, and issues—are well-suited to the themes explored.

Chetan Bhagat's inspirational talk at Symbiosis, Pune on July 24, 2008, is related to the book *Revolution 2020*. Against the backdrop of Chetan Bhagat's inspiring speech and applause at the opening function for the new batch of MBA coaching at Ganga Tech College, Varanasi, the book *Revolution 2020* begins its journey.

And I hope not just you, but my whole country will keep that spark alive, as we really need it now more than any moment in history. And here is something cool about saying – I come from the land of a billion sparks. Thank You. [117]"

At the launch of the MBA coaching programme, Ganga Tech College director Gopal invited Chetan Bhagat to give a motivating speech. After the show, Bhagat goes to the director's bungalow, Gopal's residence, to have a drink at his request. As they speak, Bhagat mentions doing "aarti" at temples in Varanasi; the term triggers a flood of memories of Gopal's sweetheart, Aarti, and he starts to feel overwhelmed by emotion. He passes out after drinking too much. He is admitted to the hospital by Bhagat, who seemed interested in hearing his narrative. Bhagat is intrigued by Gopal and his love story because of his affection for Aarti, his remarkable accomplishments, and his stress.

Gopal Mishra, Aarti Pratap Pradhan, and Raghav Kashyap are three young people whose lives are corrupted by love, passion, and ambition in *Revolution 2020*. The story and the trio's lives are significantly impacted by the other two characters, Gopal's father Baba and the local MLA Raman Lal Shukla. Since Bhagat's three protagonists are best friends from their school days in Varanasi, he provides considerable backstory on them, including how they learned each other's views. Bhagat recounts the story's narrative via Gopal's perspective, the protagonist; Gopal visualises the plot's sequences and repercussions while feeling profound shame and sorrow, and he also remembers his love for Aarti.

The position of Bhagat's characters, which mirrors their aspirations and feelings, allows him to depict the socioeconomic layers of society. Gopal comes from a middle-class background; his father, Baba, is a retired teacher, but the family's low income barely covers basic living expenses. Even if they have some ancestral land, nobody wants to talk about it. Furthermore, his father is dealing with a long-term health condition. For Baba, Gopal's future as an engineer is a lofty goal.

Raghav is from a wealthy household; his father works for BHEL, hence the family is middle class. He has always been a diligent student and a bright mind. His heart belongs to the news industry. Despite realising his parents' ambition of qualifying for the IIT-JEE and AIEEE, he

decided to pursue his true calling in journalism at ITBHU. A passionate and enraged young man, he speaks out against the corruption and immorality that permeate all aspects of society.

The story's heroine, Aarti, is the only female character. Her affluent family tree includes a district magistrate father and an ex-MLA grandpa. The girl is stunning. She catches the attention of Gopal and Raghav. She has a strong desire to work as an air hostess. She elevates the narrative via love, and she plays a pivotal part in that.

In every one of his stories, Bhagat presents a central adversary who seems to be acting in good faith but really leads the protagonists astray, leaving them unable to escape his or her sinister clutches. Shuklaji takes a similar stance when he helps resolve Gopal's property dispute; nevertheless, his well-intentioned but ultimately dishonest proposal to build an engineering college brings Gopal into the mire of corruption. He degrades and devoids Gopal of values while catering to his goal to gain money. Within the "Ganga Action Plan" initiative, Shuklaji is mired in corruption.

Bhagat used societal imagery in *Revolution 2020* to symbolise the government strategy known as the "Ganga Action Plan." Just as the river Ganga has to be cleansed, so too must the country's systems be cleared of the mountain of sociopolitical waste. Even if it's intended for reformations, the activity follows its own corrupt route under the ultimate power of the political system, as Bhagat humorously recounts.

One of the central topics of *Revolution 2020* is the love-hate relationship that Chetan Bhagat depicts via Gopal's interactions with his father, Raghav, and Aarti. Gopal, the protagonist of the book, is just a regular student with big dreams of becoming rich. Raghav gives up his promising career for the greater good of society since he is a revolutionary at heart. Like other students, Aarti wants to see the globe, which is why she's so interested in becoming an airhostess.

As Chetan Bhagat introduces his characters, he makes a little accusation against one of them, Gopal, who allegedly stole Aarti's chocolate cake without her knowledge. His gesture continued when he set the cake-cutting ruler on Aarti's desk. He keeps a careful eye on Aarti to see how she responds. Roll number one, Aarti Pratap Pradhan, caught my eye, so I straightened up and craned my neck. "Ribbons in her plaits, a red cardigan, and a white shirt" (R 2020, 11). Upon their first meeting, the three characters develop a friendship and much more when the chocolate cake stains Aarti's clothes, causing quite a stir among the students.

As time goes on, Gopal becomes fond to Aarti. Inquisitive about what she enjoys, he is willing to sacrifice

all for her. Boating on the Ganga River brings Aarti delight and pleasure, and Gopal enthralingly makes it a reality. Many times they go boat riding; sometimes they stop by the 'aartis' in the morning and the evening. Aarti and Gopal formed a love attachment. At the same time, his love life takes a back seat to his studies for the IIT-JEE and AIEEE. The fact that Gopal opens up about how he feels about Raghav passing the test is indicative of how the current educational system fosters animosity even between childhood buddies.

“—I had to meet Raghav. I had not even congratulated him. True, I did not feel any happiness about his JEE selection. I should have, but did not. After all we had been friends for ten years. One should be happy for pals. However, he would be an IIT student and I'd be a fucking nobody. Somehow, I could not feel thrilled about that. (R 2020, 39)”

Gopal says, "What I really want is not in Kota, I am leaving it behind in Varanasi" (R 2020, 46) in response to Baba's insistence that he and Gopal attend tutoring for the IIT-JEE and AIEEE in Kota for Gopal's second try. Even though Gopal's dreams and his trip to Kota are inextricably bound, Aarti's compassion and affection provide him solace. When Aarti inquires as to Gopal's interest, he responds with the sentiment shared by many middle-class youths: "We are from a simple Indian family." This scene encapsulates Bhagat's inner mindset. Such inquiries do not come from us. It is our intention to earn a livelihood. We get that from engineering. (Reference 2020, 36)

Bhagat shows Gopal's conflicted thoughts, including his awareness of his desire for Aarti and his fight for education in Kota. The picture of his supper tiffin and the pamphlets that are waiting for him in his room reveal the conflict of his viewpoint. However, his thoughts quickly go to Aarti and Raghav. Bhagat shows how suspicious Gopal felt by claiming that the phone was engaged when he called Aarti at midnight on her birthday, even though the line was engaged. Regarding this, Beena Agarwal has a valid point;

“Gopal terribly suffers from his haunting nostalgia for the company of Aarti and Raghav. Chetan Bhagat with sincere realization admits how the longing for personal relationships affects the mind and sensibility of young technocrats wandering in the wilderness in search for technical jobs. [118]”

Revolution 2020, written by Bhagat, makes use of the flashback method via first-person narrative, lending credence to its depiction. Even though he is in Kota for coaching, Gopal feels lonely because his rational connection is with the sacred city of Varanasi, where his thoughts are always on Raghav, Aarti, and Baba. Delving

into the depths of Gopal's emotions, one might see an enduring yearning for Aarti. Through Gopal's internal struggle, Chetan Bhagat vividly portrays the psychological changes that occur throughout puberty. According to Richard M. Ryckman's *Theories of Personality*,

“For many youths, adolescence is period of torturous self-consciousness characterised by awakening sexual drives and rapid growth of the body, by doubts and shame over what they are already sure they are and what they might become. [119]”

Chetan Bhagat tries to shed light on the inner lives of today's young, who might look overconfident one minute and very sensitive the next, and who experience intense emotions like frustration, sorrow, and regret. Attempting to immerse himself in the frantic pace of the Kota coaching lessons, Gopal seeks to keep himself occupied by attending them. However, he isn't really trying to advance in rank; rather, he only wants to divert his focus away from the memories of Aarti and her responsibilities to Raghav. Loneliness is a psychological battleground for Gopal, who longs to be back in Varanasi with Aarti and Baba after feeling lonely in Kota. Love, according to critic Bertrand Russell in his book "Marriage and Morals," is more than just a desire for sexual intercourse; it's also a way to escape the loneliness that affects most people for the bulk of their lives. [120]

The sacred city of Varanasi has a seductive allure for Gopal. The strong connection that Gopal has with the land of Kashi makes him proud. Whenever Bhagat uses himself as a character in a book, he would often use meta-fiction to establish himself as an author. He exhibits his emotional investment in the narrative by describing Varanasi's history, the religious rites performed at different Ghats, the importance of morning and evening "aartis," etc., while wearing the mask of Gopal. In this passage, Bhagat emphasises Gopal's love and hate feelings for Kota and Varanasi.

Chetan Bhagat ironically portrays the mechanisation of the life of the candidates in his description of the milieu of coaching centres in Kota. It is evident from Gopal's email address. The user selects "GopalKotaFactory" as their email identity. It may be funny at first glance, but it really shows how heavy Gopal feels. Aarti, on the other hand, chooses the email address "FlyingAarti" when she feels happy and at peace. Chatting with Aarti online brings Gopal comfort and serenity.

By having Gopal's feelings of love for Aarti and his possessive attitude towards her shape his awareness instead of the knowledge he has to get, Chetan Bhagat reveals the hidden insecurity of today's youth. His over attention is something Aarti would rather not deal with. Therefore, she decides to stop talking to him. As Aarti crosses his name off her list, Gopal expresses his sadness

by saying, "She had removed me from her list" (R 2020, 77).

On the day of his birthday, Gopal is thrilled to hear Aarti's voice when he receives surprise congratulations from her again. He chooses to flee to Varanasi as soon as he feels surrounded. After Gopal finishes the JEE and AIEEE exams, he returns home, where he has a passionate romance, finds solace, and develops emotional sensitivity. Since returning home is an unavoidable human need, he lavishes praise on his hometown.

"Even the filthy and crowded streets of Gadholia seemed beautiful to me. No place like your home town. More than anything, I wanted to meet Aarti. Every inch of Varanasi reminded me of her. People come to my city to feel the presence of God, but I could feel her presence everywhere. However, I had to go to Baba first. (R 2020, 95)"

Gopal plans to meet Aarti once he lands in Varanasi, but he finds out that she is at Raghav's college for the magazine launch function. He makes a beeline for it. He finds out that Aarti and Raghav are dating, which disappoints him. When Aarti and Gopal bring him comfort in her vehicle later on, he says, "It's my happiest day ever. I hope I never leave Varanasi again" (R2020, 97), describing the relocation as a watershed moment in his life. Gopal must accomplish his father's desire and get his own identity from his beloved Aarti, but he also has to fight against the pull of his future passionate and ambitious profession, which goes against his own wants and feelings.

The triangle formed by Aarti, Raghav, and Gopal is shown by Chetan Bhagat as more of a love-hate connection than a friendship. Aarti seems to have feelings for Raghav, since she wants to spend her life with him, but she also acts extremely close to Gopal in order to comfort him. She admits that Raghav is busy with his newspaper work, but she never tells Raghav about her encounters with Gopal, whom she sees often at theatres, on boat trips, and coffee shops. Building the college is also part of Gopal's Ganga Tech Project. For over three years, he practically stopped communicating with Aarti. While immersed in his ardent profession, he meets a group of interesting new individuals. This presents Gopal with a chance to show himself, he thinks.

Bhagat aims to create a mental difficulty for the character by depicting the many stages of love in their lives. Aarti offers him confusing signals by claiming, "I haven't sat in a boat for a year" (R 2020, 147), and he unexpectedly changes course in Gopal's life. Gopal is put in a difficult situation by Aarti's ambiguous behaviour; he can't tell whether she likes him or not. Aarti maintains her friendship with Gopal even after she commits to Raghav; nonetheless, Gopal feels self-conscious about his

recollections of their disagreements since Aarti insists on treating him as a friend. Bhagat shows Aarti's liberal outlook; she strives to live life to the fullest while still honouring her vows to Raghav. The fact that she and Gopal often go to the theatre together yet leave separately highlights the tension between her desires and her responsibilities. The devotion Gopal has for Aarti outweighs his ties to Ganga Tech, his lifelong ambition. The fact that Aarti is Raghav's makes him struggle and hurt. Every time he gets near to her, he feels agony because of his doubt about his love. As stated in R 2020, 154, she is Raghav's. Love becomes a major disaster in Gopal's life, as this shows.

Since Gopal is just an entertainment to Aarti, Bhagat exposes his true sentiments; Gopal leaves the house whenever Raghav calls. His function is clear, and he has no intention of interfering with their discussion. Another unfortunate event is that Aarti abandons Gopal the moment she learns that Raghav is free to see him.

"Gopal's mind unaffected with the commercial handling, for him Aarti is the main priority, "Aarti however, had come back into my life, as the only non-work person, I spent time with" (R 2020, 188). To get relief from his burden of Ganga Tech project and to make his life relish and comfort with the return of Aarti again in his life, Gopal sends a bouquet of white flowers along with the message: "Aarti and I became friends-who-meet-after-work. We met twice a week, sometimes thrice. We ate at new restaurants, visited cafes, took walks in the Ravidas Park and occasionally watched movies." (R 2020, 189)"

Aarti is a reasonable girl; she feels bad over cheating on Raghav and feels ashamed of herself. Feeling guilty, Gopal confesses that she voluntarily gave in to him with all her passion and determination. She has a sneaking suspicion that it's a kind of deceptive Raghav that causes her to make a fatal error of judgement. Regret and resolve accompany every sense of guilt. Aarti decides to keep living with Gopal, but she has a hard time letting go of her previous vow to expose her wrongdoing. Gopal claims that Aarti is a reasonable girl. Nothing happens until you want to do it...I tried to get your yes for years, but you just would not budge. That night, you were driven to do it. (R2020, 225)

Passions come in many shapes and sizes, as Chetan Bhagat depicts in his book. In order to bring about reforms in our nation, Raghav is fervently committed to revolution. Gopal, on the other hand, is hell-bent on satisfying his greed and becoming wealthy no matter the cost; Raghav is concerned with the progress of the country, whereas Gopal is more concerned with his own development.

Through his extraordinary storytelling, Bhagat

aspires to reveal the inner struggles caused by passions and emotions. Gopal gives equal weight to his two great loves: love and money. This is only the beginning, with you by my side, watch where I take it. He simultaneously aspires to attain the pinnacle of his job and win Aarti's affection. "Graduate status in three years" (R 2020, 247) states the researcher. Raghav is deeply committed to his work and his love life, but he is much more dedicated to his ideals and principles, which he uses to expose societal follies and bring about reformations in the nation. Emotions serve to complete his relationships, but desire serves just to gratify him. At first, it looks like Aarti is full of herself and her enthusiasm. The desire to spend her life with Gopal brings up memories of her connection to Raghav, which causes her turmoil whenever she experiences the emotional rush of delight with him. Passion and feeling are at odds with one another, and she struggles to keep her mind from being confused as a result.

In an attempt to end these tensions, Gopal resolves to tell Raghav the truth about his connection with Aarti. He goes to Raghav's office and meets a young man named Keshav, who brings up terrible memories of his youth. Once again, this forces Gopal to reevaluate his situation. Gopal thinks back on his past mistakes and his current achievements. In the end, he decides that his feelings for Aarti are less important than Raghav's revolution and his reformation of the country. So that they may both have a prosperous future, he chooses to leave Aarti for Raghav.

As a sign of sacrifice, Chetan Bhagat portrays Gopal, despite his accidental involvement in unjust deeds. Going back to his original plan, Gopal uses his character flaw to put him in defence and smooth over any obstacles to Aarti and Raghav's marriage. Gopal attempts to portray himself to Aarti as a characterless individual in order to persuade her to marry Raghav. This causes Aarti to alter her thoughts about him. Aarti finds out that Gopal is seeing two call girls when she visits his home to celebrate his birthday. In the end, she chooses to remove Gopal from her life when she becomes flabbergasted and changes her mind about him. Gopal managed to influence Aarti's decision by manipulating the call ladies into making a comment about him. There was a heavy blow to the face, and Gopal felt it. The disappointment on her face stings more than the smack itself. (R2020, 281)

Through Gopal's connection with his father Baba, Bhagat portrays the extraordinary tie between a son and his father. Because Baba values family ties and feelings more than worldly goods, the emotional anguish that Baba endured when his brother Ghanshyam turned over his property deeds to the bank was immense. "Leaving behind a brother was more devastating to him than losing land" (R 2020, 15). Anxiety affects Gopal's academic performance, even though this is a pivotal time for Baba to worry about Gopal and his schoolwork.

Because of these threats, Gopal lost faith in himself and ended up doing poorly in school. The notion of competing values between parents' aspirations and their children's interests was delivered by Bhagat here. Baba is shocked and dies as a result of his unfulfilled goal when Gopal is not promoted; the two love and care for one other, but they have different opinions. The father-son connection is strained due to the father's overprotectiveness and the son's academic laziness.

Revolution 2020 is an ode to the fallibility and inherent worth of the human spirit. Ideals and aspirations are only representations of life; they do not constitute it. Depression strikes Gopal when Aarti marries Raghav. He plans to overcome this by refocusing his energy on Ganga Tech, a project that he is deeply committed to. With the words "I want to work hard," he reveals his desire. Ganga Tech, let's reach new levels of excellence. I would want for us to be involved in every aspect of schooling. Engage me. So occupied that I am unable to pause and contemplate. (Reference 2020, 293)

Bhagat shows two sides of Gopal's life that are diametrically opposed. After his hopes and dreams for love and devotion crumble, he attempts desperately to escape his past and overcome his current professional difficulties. Gopal says, "Why dangerous?" and acts as if he doesn't care about the repercussions of his excessive drinking. Who will fucking weep for me? This life of mine, I want to savour. "Who cares if I die?" According to (R 2020, 5),

Through his diverse cast of characters, Chetan Bhagat reveals the concept of love and hate relationships in *Revolution 2020*, a book that exemplifies the ideals and relationships that exist in the real world. According to Bhagat, "Successful people don't have friends" (R 2020, 5), which Gopal spoke with an air of candour and vulnerability. The human condition is reflected in human suffering, which includes feelings of estrangement, despair, loneliness, yearning for interpersonal connections, love, and the underlying emptiness.

In Indian society, the education system plays a crucial role in shaping the society via the inculcation of information and values among the people, drawing on the historic traditions and culture of the country. It embodies the fundamental duty of schools to uphold moral and ethical standards as well as interpersonal connections. The well-respected teacher and student organisation serves to establish a moral link between the society and the school system. However, the formerly hallowed system is now terrified of it, and the connection between the two parties has transformed into that of a trafficker and a client, or a confer and a catch. Several disturbances in the modern educational system are responsible for this severe decline.

The flawed educational system that undermines morals is the central theme of *Revolution 2020*, written by Chetan Bhagat. Despite its seemingly little appearance, it

has significant societal implications. In a clever manner, Bhagat weaves these flaws in the school system into a love tale. In today's world, education has turned into a lucrative sector, and in pursuit of profits, some have resorted to unscrupulous practices such as bribery and political power grabs, as well as privatisation.

Conclusion

In *Revolution 2020*, Chetan Bhagat delivers a compelling narrative that not only dramatizes the love and personal ambitions of its characters but also critiques the pervasive corruption in the Indian education system. The novel serves as a social mirror reflecting the challenges that the youth face when navigating through corrupt institutions that hinder their personal and professional growth. Bhagat's portrayal of Gopal, Aarti, and Raghav underscores the complexity of individual choices within a corrupt framework and emphasizes the potential for personal integrity and revolutionary change despite systemic flaws. This study highlights the intersection of personal dilemmas and broader societal issues, offering insights into the ongoing struggle against corruption and the quest for ethical sanctity in education.

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