

REVITALIZING SOCIETY AMIDST THE EXISTING SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS

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ABSTRACT

Literature views reality critically. Modern Indian literature projects upon the problems faced by the mass due to globalization and social mobility. Chetan Bhagat is one among the prominent writers who focus on these social issues. He is mainly concerned about popular literature, social conceptualization, culture, and human relationship. Like Swami Vivekananda, Chetan strongly believes in the powers of the youth. His novels mostly center on modern youth, their aspirations, dreams, love, pain, exam fears, relationships and challenges ahead. This paper focuses on corruption that is grasping the Indian educational system and their impact on the society as portrayed in the novels of Chetan Bhagat.

Education system in India currently represents a vast contradiction. Though one proudly proclaims that the educational institutions in India are monitored by regulatory bodies like UGC, AICTE and MCI, and we have top institutions like IITs, IIMS, BITS, CSIR and Space and Atomic Energy Commission, there are yet other institutions who don't even have the basic minimum amenities. Reasons might be many, but the major reason behind is corruption. Chetan in his novel *Revolution 2020* clearly portrays the areas where corruption is involved in the present education system. He lists the important areas where corruption clutches the system. As Bhagat locates they are Privatization, Teacher appointments, private tutoring, construction of buildings or classroom, Admission process, Practical Examination, Affiliation of institution, state and local politics, purchasing, maintenances and many more. When Gopal, who is unable to secure a seat in IIT, and left with no money to continue, his education, decides to sell his father's disputed land to join a private engineering college. But to his shock he finds that even liquor barons and beedi makers can run a college. As Sunil, Gopal's friend with contempt elaborates on the corrupt education system:

'It scares me to even think of studying at these places. Liquor barons running college? Year's politicians builders, beedi-makers, anybody with experience in a shady business does really well in education. I am missing something here' (Revolution 2020).

Motivated thus in a wrong way, Gopal, who cannot get a seat in an engineering college opens a college of his own. With the assistance and guidance of the local MLA Shukla ji, he opens a new

college on the disputed land. There begins the story of corruption. Mr. Shukla's assistant Grirish Bedi, briefs Gopal about the system right from investment to making a profit. It is through Ganga Tech, the technical college of Gopal that Chetan exposes the various stages where corruption is involved in the education system. He briefs the administrative policies of getting the university affiliations. Though the words of Mr. Bedi who guides Gopal,

'No, any government work, especially in education, requires a fee. Get used to it. He then listed out the palms we had to grease in order to open a place to teach kids in our country. Apart from the UGC, we had to apply to AICTE or the all India Council for Technical Education. They clear the engineering colleges. Also, every private college requires a government university affiliation. For that, we had to get approvals from the vice-chancellor of a state university. Shukla-ji's connections and a generous envelope would do the trick. (Bhagat 138).

Gopal is completely novice about the system, but Bedi is an expert. He is thorough with the whole system and knows how to settle the matter. He is an expert in bribing and bargaining. Chetan is highly ironical when he refers to the reputation of these government Babus who take bribes, and wants to exhibit themselves as dead honest. When a bulldozer comes for demolition of a particular building at Ganga Tec, Shukla ji advises Gopal to bribe the officer concerned in such a way that none of his colleagues are aware of that.

“...Put the notes in an empty cement bag, topped up with sand...His colleagues should not see it. He has a solid reputation.”
[Revolution 2020].

Chetan has no hesitation in describing these private college as a safer Shelter for all mafias and corrupt persons of the society. These private college not only provide huge money but even enhance the reputation of these liquor barons as noble people. Chetan through his portrayal poses a simple question. How could these institution provide value education to the future generation.

Kabirdas, a famous Hindi poet and social reforms celebrates gurus to be above god. As the orders goes, it is matha, pitha, guru, deivan. But Chetan has a different picture. Corruption has changed the motive of the post too. It is no more a post of dignity, reputation, and responsibility. It is rather a post of income. When Gopal, an amateur, asks Bedi if they have to bribe the school principals, Bedi utters,

'Yes. But never say that word especially to school principals, Anyway, it is a straight forward calculation. We give them ten percent of the fee we take for every admission (Revolution 2020).

Chetan by exhibiting the corruption that prevails in the education system doesn't blame an independent individual or a group. He points an accusing finger towards the society, the stakeholders. According to Chetan, the first in the list to be blamed is the parents like Baba, the father of Gopal who wanted to see his son as an engineer. He failed to understand the passion and ambition of his son. He was choked in reality that an engineering degree from a reputed institution is the only means for a middle class boy like Gopal to earn a secured job, money and happiness in life.

Hence he sends his son to Kota for coaching, while Gopal wants to do a degree in Varanasi and earn money. Making big money was the only aim in Gopal. To him to earn money engineering alone was not a means. Yet he failed to make his father understand his wish. Gopal's father is a representative of most of the fathers of the contemporary world. Chetan's criticism does not stop with illiterate parents like Baba alone. He is very cynical in presenting the demands of the elite class too. Professor of IIT – Prof Cherrian is a good example. There is no big difference between both the fathers. Cherrian forced his son to do engineering when his son was interested in law. Unable to stand against his father, Samir committed suicide. As the Professor himself quotes :

“He failed to get in the first time and I made life hell for him. He failed a second time and I made his life an even bigger hell. Then he failed to get in the third time. And this time, he killed himself. (Bhagat *Five Point Someone* 259) Professor Cherrian takes the responsibility of the death of his son, “He killed himself because he did not get into IIT. He killed himself because of me” (*Five Point Someone* 260).

In the professor and Baba one finds the reflections of the terrible authority of parents. As Samir ends his life so does Baba.

Chetan Bhagat conveys a genuine message, or rather places a request before the parents as not to force their children to be the one they want. As parents they are supposed to treat them as a plant and to nurture their growth than scrubbing them for ever. This naturally creates a feeling of detachment towards parents.

Bhagat still goes a step forward and criticizes the very structure of the educational system. In this first novel *Five Point Somebody*, Bhagat has insisted that the present technical education has become lifeless and it needs revitalization and massive reformation. It is not sufficient enough for the overall development of the personality. Adhering to the old patriarchal norms, students are overloaded with assignments, class tests and major exams. Evaluating the cognitive abilities of a student on the basis of GPA (Grade Points Average) kills the creativity of students. They give up their youth for a successful carrier. They forget the real meaning of life as Ryan comments,

‘ It suppresses the talent and individual spirit. It extracts the best years of one's life from the countries brightest minds’ (*Five Point Someone*).

According to Bhagat, education is for life and not for securing a job. There is an opinion among the mass that graduates from elite technical universities get good jobs, make big money and are often sought out marriage partners. But the novel *Five point Someone* pictures it in a different way. These IITians enjoy a better place in the marriage market but not in life. They either committed suicide or spoil their career and life.

The reason behind is these technical giants are good at theoretical reality but they are unable to articulate their voice in real life situations. They are expert in expressing their views on various topics which includes corruption, politics, society and much more. Yet are they really efficient enough to solve the problems involved in these fields' remains a question. Chetan has made it clear through his characters that dry knowledge leads to stagnation. As Ryan comments :

‘And this IIT system is nothing but a mice race. It is not a rat race, mind you, as rats sound somewhat shrewd and clever. So it is not about that. It is about mindlessly running a race for four years, in every class, every assignment and every test. It is a race where profs judge you every ten steps, with a GPA stamped on you every semester... what have IITs given to this country? Name one invention in the last three decades (Five Point Someone)’. Chetan in mild tone points out that our technical education has become a lifeless system and needs reformation. By tapping on the students creativity, they must be assisted to convert their knowledge into innovative wisdom. For Bhagat, life is beyond marks or promotion in a job. Hence his characters rebel against the academic procedures of continuous mugging, testing and assignments. They do risk things. They wish to break the grading rule.

In *Five Point Someone*, Ryan and his friends plan to enjoy the prime days of their life at the institute. They plan for a group adventure. Ryan names the plan as C2D (ie) cooperation to dominate. They don’t look at pleasure and enjoyment as sin. As it is stated, according to them, ‘Life is too short, enjoy yourself to the fullest. One of the best parts of campus life is the friends you make. And make sure you make them for life’ (Ibid 262).

His characters attached more important to their personal life. They value relationship. Ryan and Hari take care of Alok’s parents and Alok when he attempts suicide. Gopal, respects Raghav’s and Aarthi’s relationship. He sacrifices Aarthi to Raghav beyond his lifelong love for her. Though environment plays a major role in corrupting Gopal in his hunt for money, Gopal retains his original character towards the end. When it comes to Raghav, he values his ambition more beyond his career. Being an engineering graduate from elite technical institution, he prefers journalism as his profession to facilitate his purpose of refining the society. Prof. Cherian, acknowledges the talent of Hari, Ryan and Alok as an obituary to his son and facilitates them to receive their degree on time. Shukla ji, the corrupt politician bestow his property on Gopal when he goes to jail. Doing so Shukla proves that he is a human being who value relationships.

To conclude, with the broad vision about the corrupted education system of the present, Chetan portrays a new dimension to reform the society. He strongly believes in the enormous energy bestowed in the youth and asserts that it is only in the hands of the youth that the reformation lies. His fictional characters no more exists in a world where they are in no mood to change themselves. They don’t run after money. They are revolutionist and wants to change the world. They are bothered about political, social and personal issues rather than feeling sick and depressed. They are ready to work towards refinement. This generation ZEE of Chetan is ready to fight for refinement than surrendering to failures. The way Chetan Bhagat picturizes his characters places him an edge above his contemporaries. This act of Bhagat presents him to the literary world in a different perspective. He is not a none serious writer, but a writer who presents serious message in a lighter vein.

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