

**Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020*- Looking at the other side of the coin of Education**

Nisarg R.Kothari

Department of English, M.A.Parikh Fine Arts & Arts College,  
Palanpur, Gujarat.

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**Abstract**

*The concept of the privatization of education has been under the scanner for a long time. There are some academicians who oppose the privatization of education vehemently, whereas the others favour it, keeping in mind the need of the hour. Chetan Bhagat, a best-selling novelist emerges on the literary scenario as a thinker, having balanced view of it. His novel 'Revolution 2020' encapsulates a serious concern for the education, while narrating a romantic love story which tosses between Gopal - Aarti and Raghav.*

*The novelist firmly believes that the privatization of education would be beneficial for the society, if some good quality players actively participate in it. He does not only raise the questions, but comes out with remedial ways. He does not only present the gloomy and horrid picture of the present educational scenario, but also shows how to make it beautiful*

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**Key words:** *Education, Privatization, Good quality players' participation*

**Introduction**

The mushrooming of private colleges in India is conspicuous. From the hoarding to the full page advertisement and the wall stickers, a mortal soul will find it difficult to divert his mind from the lucrative schemes they offer. The business tycoons, the local shop owners and the leisurely housewives all find the business of teaching a convenient mean to earn moolahs. Our paper aims to explore how privatization of education would adversely affect the future of the young generation. We would like to substantiate the theme with the recent novel of Chetan Bhagat '*Revolution 2020*.'

When India is on the verge of being a super power, it would be a fatal blow for the nation to neglect the issues of higher education. If we look around us; we would wonder why government's red-tapism does not affect in providing affiliation to these colleges who neither have good infrastructure nor the teaching faculties. The most ironical matter is that all of them make tall claims to bring about the sea change in the lives of the students by imparting value education to them. The helpless lot of students has no other option except to surrender their future in the hands of these businessmen. What else can we expect where the students are treated as 'customers' rather than 'students'. For them, education is a safe investment which brings rich dividend. It is for sure that government's nagging attitude towards running its own colleges can't be justified in any ways.

Chetan Bhagat, the author of four bestselling novels- '*Five Point Someone*', '*One Night at the Call Centre*', '*The 3 mistakes Of my Life*' and '*2 states*', takes up this challenging issue in his fifth novel *Revolution 2020*. Chetan Bhagat, in one of his columns '*The Bootlegging Of Education*' clearly expresses his views on privatization of education:

*“ We have good, reputed colleges that, at best, accommodate 10% of the applicant pool of students. What happens to the rest? Obsessed with starting salaries and IIT-IIMs and DU cut-offs, we ignore that millions don't make it. Where do these students go? Do they have a shot at a good life?*

*Many of these students end up in private colleges. These private colleges have played the role of providing students with a chance to earn a degree of their choice. There is nothing wrong in this. In fact, it is even good that the private sector is playing a role in educating our students. But the quality of these institutions is an issue.*

*Thousands have opened up in the last decade. In NCR alone, there are over a hundred MBA colleges now. With such proliferation, quality standards vary widely across these institutes. While there is demand for them given our large student pool, what they are teaching and what students are learning is another matter. To ensure quality, the government has put in place procedures like elaborate approval processes and regular inspections. However, these are abused and corruption is rife. Many private college owners have personally admitted to me that they had to pay bribes at every stage of opening the college – from getting land and building approvals, to approving the course plan and to set fee structures. Corruption in the private education sector is such a norm that nobody in the know even raises an eyebrow anymore.”*

Chetan Bhagat is not a rebel who opposes the privatization of education. He puts his thoughts in an easy manner. He believes that the field of education should provide a proportionate profit to the industry players, and the mindset that education should be non-profitable has to be changed. Speaking to *The Hindu* in the run-up to the release of his fifth novel, *Revolution 2020: Love. Corruption. Ambition*, Mr. Bhagat said:

*“The government policy is that the private institutes should be run by non-profit trusts. As a result, credible corporates don't venture into the education sector because the shareholders want profit. The government believes that you should not make money from education. This has led to a situation where a lot of people who have black money have ventured into the sector. They take out the money illegally in cash and on paper maintain the no-profit status.”*

He strongly believes that the profit should be moderate and not infinite. He implores the good quality players to take keen interest in the field of education to provide value education.

He says,

*“The private participation is a must but it should be done in a way that the right kind of people come forward. If a professor wants to open a college, he should be able to do it but today he can't because he has to be corrupt at every level. The non-profitability clause should go away. It costs hundreds of crores to establish a university. People are not going to establish educational institutes for the goodness of their heart.”*

To bring forth the sordidness of modern higher education, he takes up the issue of the same in his recent novel *Revolution 2020* where the protagonist Gopal, who slowly learns to adapt himself with the worldly ways and starts running a private college, inspite of holding nominal degrees, says,

*‘Sixteen hundred students now, Chetan-ji across all batches. Each paying one lakh a year. We already have a sixteen crore turn over. And you inaugurated the MBA coaching today. That's another new business’ (p.3)*

Apart from the Romantic love story which tosses between Raghav-Aarti and Gopal-Aarti, the writer touches upon the sensitive issues of education. Gopal, comes across horrifying incidents when he reaches Kota to get coaching for his IIT entrance exam preparations. Here he feels that he is going to submit his future in the hands of not trainers but salesmen who queue up to attract the customers cum students.

When Gopal fails to pay the debt incurred by his father for his education, he determines to sell his disputed land. He takes aid of Mr.Shukla, a shrewd politician who takes

upon this opportunity to earn millions. He suggests Gopal to open a college on the disputed land for which he would get all the consents required from the authority. Mr.Shukla's assistant explains the tricks of the trade to Gopal. Mark his words:

*‘Well, you take a profit. The trustees can take out cash from the trust, showing it as an expense. Or take some fee in cash, and not accounting for it. Or ask a contractor to pay you back a portion of what you pay them. There are many more ways...’*

Here we come across how the manipulators of the private institutes of higher education make handsome profit while showing their balance sheet non profitable. At the same time, the novel throws light on how by greasing the palms or with the help of acquaintances of the high profile leaders, one can easily get the university affiliations for running institutes which are not liable to provide value education to the future generation. To substantiate our arguments, we would like to quote the speech of Mr.Bedi, one of the characters of the novel, when he teaches Gopal how to get the university affiliation:

*‘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. Shuklaji's connections and a generous envelope would do the trick.’ (p.138)*

The corruption, which is ubiquitous in each and every branch of administrative offices, has clutched our nation from top to bottom. The writer made us feel it by narrating a shocking incident in which Gopal gets his land rezoned by greasing the palm. It is also humorous how Gopal bargains with the deputy collector, Sinha by requesting him to be reasonable as it is for opening a new college. Note the dealing between Gopal and Deputy Commissioner:

*‘It's a college, please be reasonable’, I said*

*‘I am being reasonable. But ten is too less. Fifteen, ’Sinha said.*

*‘No concession for Shukla-ji?’ I said.*

*‘This is already half of what I take,’ Sinha said*

*Eleven? I said. I was bargaining with him as if I was buying a tea-shirt.’*

Having brought forth corruption outside the educational institutes, the writer draws our attention towards the internal corruption in the institutes of higher education where the dean of the institute does not consider it essential to remain present in the campus. The educational sector which was considered pious once, has now become the muddy place and all the people involved in this whether he may be the dean or the director or the principal or the teacher have nothing to do with the quality of education to some extent. They consider students as money minting machines. Gopal also misses a heart beat when he comes to know how the institutes can run without the active participation of the dean. Mark the conversation between Gopal and the director.

*‘I’ll charge ten thousand per hire as search fee, apart from my salary’*

*‘That’s fine. When can you start?’ I said*

*‘Anytime’, he said ‘I will come to campus three days a week’*

*‘Three days?’ I said ‘You are the dean of the institute. How can the college work without you?’*

*‘I am the dean, that is why three days. Else, once a week is enough’, He said.*

*‘What?’ I said.*

*‘Which faculty goes to teach every day in private colleges? Don’t worry, I will tell the AICTE inspectors I am there every day’*

*‘But who will manage the faculty? Who will ensure that classes are held on time and the students are taught properly?’ I said, my heart beating fast. I didn’t know if this was how a college dean should be.*

*‘it’s a private college. We will manage. Tell him, Bedi-ji, how it works’.Srivastava grinned.*

When Gopal gets through the process of appointing the dean who takes the responsibility of ‘fixing’ everything, he finds himself relieved. But there are many surprises in store for him. He gets to know that he has to pay bribes even to the school principals to recommend his college. Mr Bedi enlightens Gopal with the hard learned knowledge. He says, *‘The schools have a big influence on where the child goes next. Many try for an IT and NIT, most don’t make it. Where do they go?’*

*‘Where?’ I said.*

*‘That’s where we come in. Private colleges can fulfill your dream of becoming an engineer, even if you didn’t clear the entrance exam. The problem is, there are so many private colleges now. How does the student choose?’*

*‘They go with the school teacher’s and principal’s advice. Who else can they trust?’*

*‘Do we bribe them too? I said.*

*‘Yes. But never say that word, especially to school principals. Anyways, it is a straightforward calculation. We give them ten percent of the fee we take every admission’’*

We feel that all these words like discount, schemes are deceptive and are meant to serve their own purposes.

The story becomes more gripping, when Raghav, once a friend of Gopal who instead of accepting high profile jobs, prefers to join the field of journalism, makes up his mind to expose MLA Shukla and shows the people his corrupt face. Mr. Shukla devours the government money which should have been used to clean the Ganga river. Raghav scoops the complete matter and brings the Ganga Tech Engineering College under his scanner as it is funded by the black money as Mr. Shukla is the sleeping partner of the institute. Raghav has to suffer a heavy backlash for making it public. He wants to bring about the revolution in society. But this poor fellow finds himself a tiny tot against these educational giants. These educational goons forced the editor to sack Raghav from their job. They threaten the editor of not providing the advertisements to their newspaper, if the management is not willing to sack Raghav. When Raghav starts publishing his own newspaper, they even vandalise his office and makes his life miserable. What is ironical is that they are the same people who boast of providing moral and ethical education to the students. If they lack sensitivity in their hearts, how can they sensitize the students?

The end of the novel shows that it is very difficult to adhere to one’s principles in the era in which we live as it is a world of the mighty and for the mighty. The educational field is also not an exception from this bitter truth. Chetan Bhagat, in one of his essays *‘The Business of Teaching’* rightly remarks that corruption in the field of education should not be taken lightly. He says;

*‘‘You don’t need to be an expert to realise 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 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. ‘‘*

He also expresses his serious concern over the fact that education, now a day, has become the domain of those people who have nothing to do with education. Any liquor baron, sadiwala, mithaiwala can open a college and we are compelled to hand over the future of our young generation in their hands. He says.

*“The sari shop owners, the mithaiwalas, the liquor barons...they don't have any commitment towards education. I am not against commercialisation but I am against corruption. Commercialisation is going to make it sustainable, so it is fine.”*

We should strive to form a society in which neither the students nor the teachers are being exploited. The scenario in the educational fields is very depressing .Where the teacher has to work for the measly salary, how can he keep himself away from the worldly cares? When most of the government teachers enjoy the benefits of sixth pay commission, it is a big question mark how many private colleges even offer the fifth pay commission to their employees. Still there is always a ray of hope, as Chetan Bhagat says,

*“This can be done. This needs to be done. Indians care about education. We can have one of the best education systems in the world. It is a matter of collective will and a few good leaders who will make this happen. It should not require a fast or dharna or yatra or anti-politician slogans. When something is sensible, it should just be done. For, that is what educated people do. And we would like to call ourselves educated, won't we? “*

Our paper is a humble attempt to bring in light the loopholes of the modern higher educational system. As Mr.Schumpeter rightly remarks in his article in ‘The Indian Express’ that the universities suffer from many maladies besides cost. Problems that were irritating during the years of affluence have grown to be cancerous in an age of austerity. Over a third of America’s students show no improvements in critical thinking or analytical reasoning after four years in college. Is it not so as well in our country?”

Lawrence Lowell, the President of Harvard, remarked, *“Institutions are rarely murdered; they meet their end by suicide. They die because they have outlived their usefulness, or fail to do the work that the world wants done.”* The internet is changing the rules. Star academics can lecture to millions online rather than the chosen few in person. A day will come when young students using internet will wonder whether there were huge campuses where thousands of students studied together. Online enrollments are growing speedily.

The higher education is business for many and ironically business of none. For new, influential entrants in this noble field, ‘E’ is not for education but for earning. No justice in

the court, no proper treatment in the hospital and no education in a college! Instead of offering rosy dreams to the students, the government should take some strict measures otherwise the dreams of many students will be shattered. The wrath of the students will turn out to be a tsunami which may wreck havoc in the educational sector.

### **References**

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