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(डॉ. मुंजाजी रासवे)  
उपकुलसचिव



## 20. Business of Education in Revolution 202 by Chetan Bhagat

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### **Abstract**

It is an open secret that opening educational institutes has become a business in the twenty-first century. Anybody, whether educated or not, can open any type of institute. The one who never went to college also opens the college (Bhagat, 3). The only qualification that is required to start it is to have money. Soon after the independence, many illiterate people opened institutes, but they were 'non-profitable' organizations (Bhagat, 125). The education at that time was either free or at a minimal cost. The trustee also helped the needy students financially. It was okay up to the end of the twentieth century.

The growing population of India required more institutes. So, instead of opening new institutes on its own, the government loosened the rules to let the rich start the institute. These rich people invest crores of rupees in the infrastructure and are collecting from students under the heads of different fees.

Slowly, a new trend sets in, providing minimal infrastructure and collecting more and more fees. To hide the breach in infrastructure, the trustee started giving a huge bribe to the educational ministers, officers, inspection officers, municipal officers, newspaper editors, and so on (Bhagat, 135, 138, 141). This corruption begins from the nursery and grows upward to the higher education. Everybody knows this secret, but nobody acts to stop it. There is much news about the scandals (More-The Indian Express). But after the news, such newspapers are duly set. Chetan Bhagat recorded this grave reality, especially in higher education, in his novel *Revolution 2020: Love. Corruption. Ambition* (2011).

**Keywords:** Education System, Business, Corruption, Bribe, College, Institute

### **Introduction**

The better the education, the more developed the nation. However, the whole education system in India is hollow based on corrupt practices. Even the magistrate knows "how the education business works" (Bhagat, 170). Bhagat has shown how corruption in education starts

right from acquiring land, getting building permissions, government permission to start an institute, fee structure, infrastructure, recruitment salary to placement, and many more things (Bhagat, 135, 138, 141). "... politicians, builders, beedi-makers. Anybody with experience in a shady business does really well in education" (116). It is the most profitable business. The business of coaching classes is on the top. He picturized all this from the point of view of Gopal, the central character from the novel.

### **Business of Coaching Centres:**

Bhagat also penned about the business of coaching classes for AIEEE and IIT and NEET, especially in Kota, Rajasthan (49-92). A huge amount is turned over every year. Lakhs of students end their hope for a bright future, but the coaching centres earn crores of rupees (32, 49). The same situation is found in many cities like Kota, Pune, Nanded, Nagpur, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Delhi, Jaipur, Noida, and so many others (Google search - Poor Facilities in India Coaching Centre Hubs in India News).

Some standard coaching centres are run in these educational hubs. As per the novel, Bansal, Career Path and Resonance are the best centres in Kota. But they are highly paid. The children of farmers and workers do not take the risk of investing or wasting money on these tuitions. If they fail the main examination, they either join fourth-class service or commit suicide. Gopal's erstwhile room-resident had committed suicide (Bhagat, 55).

However, one can find many subsidiary centres running there like parasites as options to the standard ones. The students, who fail the entrance test of the standard centres and the repeaters, are lured with discounts in fees by these lower centres. The managers of the centres say, "Why waste money? Course material is the same. My cousin is an ex-Bansal faculty" (Bhagat, 60). The managers even bargain the fee with the students (61). They also plant agents or mediators who work in standard centres, but ask students to join the substandard ones. By doing so, they get their fixed share.

These cheap coaching centres advertise themselves through different methods. The brochure of AimIIT, a subsidiary coaching centre, has the gaudiest sentence: 'We believe in the democratic right of every student to be coached; hence we don't conduct our own entrance tests' (Bhagat, 57). These non-standard centres give money to the self-studied toppers in the main examinations to publish their photos on the banners of the centres as their product. These classes also offer a huge discount on fees to children of farmers and the brightest students. They have large

classrooms with projectors or LED screens (Bhagat, 59). The classes are messy, noisy, and overcrowded.

The students accept their failure, but their parents do not. They want their children to repeat the entrance. For parents, they had not studied enough. The conversation between Gopal and his father displays parental pressure.

‘How can you not get a good rank?’

Well, not everyone does, Baba. Nine lakh fifty thousand of us didn’t. but I did not air my thought.

‘Now what?’ he said.

I wondered if I should suggest some options – suicide, penance in the Himalayas or a life of drudgery as a labourer?

‘I am sorry, Baba,’ I said.

‘I told you to study more,’ he said.

*Which parent doesn’t?* (32)

In addition to classes, room owners, watchmen, food providers, and taxi drivers exploit the students (Bhagat, 49-51).

### **Corruption in Opening a College**

Corruption shows its face everywhere in India. Bhagat has given many references to corruption and illegal activities in the different governmental administrative systems. Fake wood is sold as sandalwood for cremation (206); ration shop owners black-market the ration; LPG cylinders are sold illegally; the RTO officers take bribes (190); Poojari performs rites according to the amount of pooja-charges; and so on. There is corruption in jail also. Like a hotel, the services in prison for the rich and the politicians are provided (246). If such matters come into the news, the reporters and the newspaper owner are shut up with bribes, advertisements, or threats to their lives (179). The CM, in the novel, says, “Everyone has a price,”. Shukla says, “Well, he does want to live, doesn’t he?” (239)

Gopal says that the Varanasi Central Jail has private cells of fifteen by ten feet, resembling a government guest house. The MLA, Mr. Shukla, the trustee of Gopal’s college, is imprisoned there. He has fruits, Johnnie Walker Black Label wine, salted cashew nuts and almonds, colour TV, and cold drinks in his cell (253-254). Arvind Adiga also depicted such corrupt activities in his Booker Prize-winning novel *The White Tiger* (2008).

However, the hike is when corruption occupies the educational system. They call bribes with the nickname, 'fee'. One of the characters in the novel says, "Any government work, especially in education, requires a fee" (138). "There is a food chain of people at every step" (117). Some special agents help the trust to receive permission from the government to open a college. They know the 'fee' and the person with whom the contact is made. In the novel, Bedi plays the role of this agent. He has links with Varanasi Nagar Nigam to get permission to re-zone agricultural land into an educational campus. The illegal amount to do it is forty lakh rupees for 30 acres. Since the MLA is opening the college, the rate dropped to twelve lakh rupees for thirty acres. For building permission, the figure is different. They accept this bribe only after the office hours (138).

The corruption does not stop with money only. Some officials who come to inspect the land, building plan, and infrastructure want 'girls' too (Bhagat, 135). In the application to UGC and the University, the proposed plan has every detail regarding courses offered, facilities offered, and faculty hiring plan. But there is always a discrepancy between the proposal and the reality. To make out this discrepancy, the inspection committee demands "a thick pocket to every inspector" (138). To obtain an inspection date also, they demand a bribe (138). The people on these committees are University lecturers from government colleges. The job of inspection is such lucrative, that the lecturers have to bribe their heads to get one (138). They bribe senior management at UGC, AICTE, or someone in the education ministry. Even the Vice-Chancellors also accept bribes to give affiliation to the professional colleges.

In the novel, Gopal spent the amount of seventy-two lakhs, twenty-three thousand and four hundred rupees on offering bribes to open GangaTech engineering college. It includes everything from electricity connections to construction site labour approvals (141). However, the money made by scams and corruption is invested in opening the colleges. MLA Shukla made money from Ganga Action Plan for purifying water of the Ganga River used for opening GangaTech College (192).

In the case of recruitment of faculty, the retired professors from IIT or NIT demand too much. They also want some part of their salary in cash to save income tax (Bhagat, 157). They also charge a fixed amount to search for other faculty. Shrivastava, who retired from NIT and joined GangaTech as the Dean, and comes to college thrice a week, says, "Which faculty goes to teach every day in private colleges? Don't worry, I will tell the AICTE inspectors I am there every

day” (157). Bedi agrees with him, and says, “Later on, senior students can teach first-year students. Happens in many colleges” (158).

After opening the college, it is the time to get admission. Here also corrupt practices are observed. Apart from advertising in media, everybody who gives an admission is fixed by offering ten percent of the total fee of the student. Bedi explains this to Gopal,

“What did he (Shrivastava) mean by ‘fix’ the school principals?” I said.

“The schools have a big influence on where the child goes next. ... They go with the school teachers’ and principals’ advice. Where else can they trust?” Bedi said.

“So we ask the principal to recommend our college? ... Do we bribe them too?” I said.

“Yes. But never say that word, especially to school principals. Anyway, it is a straightforward calculation. We give them ten percent of the fee we take for every admission. ... We give ten percent to anyone – coaching classes, career fair organizations or whoever helps us fill up the college.” Bedi. (Bhagat, 158-159)

Once Aarti, Gopal’s friend, asked him about the opening of the college. Gopal humorously replied, “When we manage to please every Indian government official on this earth” (169), we will open the college.

Even if admissions are full, AICTE permits to admit more students after giving them their share (Bhagat, 207).

### **Business of Education**

There are many private colleges opened with professional academic programmes. The government seems indifferent to such colleges by itself. It is irresponsible to provide such amenities to common people. It appeals to the rich, irrespective of their intention, to come forward to open such colleges. But the simple question is, why should anyone invest their money in non-profitable sectors? Therefore, the rich took this opportunity to open a business through education. Gopal says, “I am starting a new business. ... I am opening a college” (129). And the rich become quite successful, like Gopal, in their attempt. Gopal says, “Sixteen hundred students now, Chetanji, across all batches. Each pays one lakh a year. We already have a sixteen-crore turnover. And you inaugurated the MBA coaching today. That’s another new business” (3). This money is cleverly taken out by the trustees for their benefit. “The trustees can take out cash from the trust, showing it as an expense. Or take some fee in cash, and not account for it. Or ask a contractor to

pay you back a portion of what you pay them. There are many more ways ...”, as Bedi says (Bhagat, 125).

They, who do not get admission to government colleges, pay a huge fee to private colleges to complete their education. In the novel, Vineet, the entrance repeater, is now a student at a private engineering college. He says to Gopal, “Don’t be so shocked. We, like millions of other students, are the losers in the Great Indian Education Race. Be happy with whatever you get. Of course, if your parents are rich, do an MBA after BTech. Another shot at a job” (Bhagat, 107).

To complete the education, the students have to pay college fees, hostel charges, bus transportation, and food expenditures. Even after spending lakhs of rupees for five to seven years, they are not sure of getting a good salary package (Bhagat, 107). They join a call centre after engineering.

Events (managements) for admissions of BE, Hotel Management, Medical, aviation academies, BBA, etc are organized as an advertisement of the college. Stalls of many colleges with large banners with college names (especially of gods and goddesses), emblems, buildings (half-built), and campus areas are displayed. Management members in suits boast about their college before the parents and their loser (in entrance) children. Some happy and prettier-than-toppers in Kota brochures senior second-year students are there to show that they are doing well in college. Faculty members, who perhaps completed their BE from other private colleges, are kept in stalls to ensure a better atmosphere on the campus (Bhagat, 112).

In these stalls, sometimes, quarrels pick between colleges over the admission of the students. They bargain in fee. In the novel, there is a quarrel between Shri Ganesh Engineering College and Chintumal Engineering College, both owned by brothers doing business in country liquor (Bhagat, 114-116).

Children of farmers also complete their engineering for jobs and dowry (Bhagat, 188).

Bribes are given to the HR Managers of reputed companies also to hire students from the college. Many colleges arrange campus placement and some of the students get recruited in the event. This event is also ‘fixed’ with the HR Managers. This placement or recruitment of students soon after the completion of their education attracts and fetches other students to get admission to these colleges. In the words of Gopal, “Every aspect of running a private college involved bribing someone. Why should placements be an exception?” (Bhagat, 273).

At the end of the novel, Gopal wishes to extend his 'business' by opening Business Management Studies at Under-Graduate and Post-Graduate levels. It is more profitable than Engineering. Consultants say, "Business Management Studies (BMS) is the best. You can charge as much as engineering, but you don't need facilities like labs." ... "Faculty is also easy. Take any MCom or CA types, plenty of them available" (Bhagat, 284).

Gopal says they started the process of opening the BMS and bribing concerning people. So, "We had a new set of government people who had to approve our plans, and thus a new set of palms to be greased. ... Millions of kids would be tested, rejected and spat out of the education system every year. We had to keep our net handy to catch them (Bhagat, 288).

### **Conclusion**

In such a miserable condition, the Indian education system is trying to sustain itself. Everybody is busy solving their own problem. Nobody has time to bring this grave condition forth. If a reporter like Raghav Kashyap tries to unveil the corruption, he is either bought, fired from his job, destroyed, or threatened to life. This open secret has no proof, and so it grows and spreads very rapidly all over India.

Chetan Bhagat also hints at suggestions to stop this corruption. According to him, the government should give priority to education. New colleges as per the demand be opened. The government should allow to make a legitimate profit to improve the quality of education (152). Moreover, the government also can take the initiative on its own part to open new professional colleges by providing all the necessary amenities like IIT, IIM, and other government institutes.

Aarti tells Gopal about Raghav, "He believes the revolution begins at home. Society changes only when individual family norms are challenged" (149). The need of the time is to change ourselves first; the world will be changed automatically.

Raghav started his newspaper entitled, *Revolution 2020*, the title of the novel. He wants to change journalism. Give it some teeth. He believes the contents of the paper matter more. He also believed that India would have a full-blown revolution by 2020. The Indian youth would dismantle the old corrupt system and would put a new one in place (Bhagat, 196-197). The novel was written in 2011, but even in 2024, things are the same; perhaps more critical than 2011.

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