

ECONOMIC DETERMINISM AND CLASS STRUGGLE: A MARXIST CRITIQUE
OF CHETAN BHAGAT'S *REVOLUTION 2020*

Ghulam Mohi Ud Din

PhD Scholar (English Literature), Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: gmdin411@gmail.com

Samina Yasmin

Lecturer in English, University of Education (Faisalabad Campus), Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: samina.yasmin@ue.edu.pk

Sajeel Ahmed

Roll No. BSF 2103507, Department of English, University of Education (Faisalabad campus), Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: ahmadsajeel166@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

*The capitalist system widens the gap between the material prosperity of a privileged few and the socio-economic degradation of the majority. It facilitates a select few while consigning the masses to lives of struggle and suffering. The study, employing a qualitative methodology – analytical, interpretive, and deductive – uses Marxist literary theory to critically examine Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020*. As a prominent novelist, Bhagat expertly critiques capitalism, uncovering its corrosive impact on locally valued socio-cultural norms. The study foregrounds how capitalist system dismantles pre-capitalist social harmony, resulting in class struggle and socio-economic exploitation of the marginalized. It also highlights how economic forces shape socio-familial relations, with the relentless pursuit of wealth undermining ethical values. Moreover, it explores how capitalism fuels corruption, ambition, and emotional turmoil, destabilizing societal structures. Ultimately, the study finds that economic disparities are the root cause of social instability and recommends systemic reforms to build a more just, peaceful, and exploitation-free society.*

Key words: Chetan Bhagat, *Revolution 2020*, Marxism, Economic determinism, Class struggle

Introduction

Currently, humanity is standing at the crossroads. On one side, the remarkable advancements in science and technology offer the potential for unprecedented social prosperity and cultural development. On the other side, the very existence of the human race is imperiled by the exploitation of the marginalized in pursuit of limitless profit, leading to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few while the majority face mass unemployment, poverty, ignorance, war, and epidemics. In the Oxfam's report, Ratcliff (2017) observes that the income inequality is prevailing in the existing world order: "Eight men own the same wealth as the 3.6 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity" (para. 1).

In this precarious context, it is imperative to encourage research on indigenous works, as such scholarship not only redefines aesthetic standards but also emphasizes the importance of socially engaged literature, particularly in cultures facing oppression. Literature can no longer be viewed merely as a form of luxury or passive consumption. Rather, it must serve as a vehicle that empowers movements of resistance, fosters change, and champions progress and revolution. As Eagleton (2002) argues in *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (3rd Ed.):

Marxist criticism is not merely a 'sociology of literature', concerned with how novels get published and whether they mention the working class. Its aim is to explain the

literary work more fully; and this means a sensitive attention to its forms, styles and meanings. But it also means grasping those forms, styles and meanings as the product of a particular history. (p. 3)

Eagleton (2002) also posits that Marxism perceives history as a process of continuous and dynamic transformation driven by class struggle. It opposes class divisions and advocates for the establishment of an egalitarian society. It seeks to awaken the masses to their social, economic, and political rights, empowering the proletariat to challenge the injustices and inequalities perpetuated by the bourgeoisie. Through this collective awareness and action, the marginalized can liberate themselves from the dominance of the privileged elite. This is seen as the only viable path toward the realization of an equitable and progressive society. Eagleton (2002) declares:

Marxism is a scientific theory of human societies and the practice of transforming them and what means rather more concretely is that the narrative Marxism has to deliver the story of the struggles of men and women to free themselves from certain forms of exploitation and oppression. (p. 65).

Bottomore (1983), in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (2nd Ed.), argues that Marxism emphasizes texts in which the interests and struggles of the working classes are central. He asserts that “the great literature is that which manages to penetrate beyond surface appearances, to perceive and expose the social totality, with all its contradictions” (Bottomore, 1983, p. 6). Similarly, Lang and William (1972), in *Marxism and Art: Writing in Aesthetics and Criticism*, suggest that genuine and committed artists and authors possess the capacity to challenge ideological constructs by critically engaging with the realities surrounding them. However, they acknowledge that this requires significant effort. They assert that “social tendencies and structure are integral to the very makeup of human experience and a fortiori of works of art” (Lang & William, 1972, p. 11).

Bhagat is, undoubtedly, a prominent Indian novelist whose works have the potential to challenge prevailing ideologies by reflecting on the societal conditions around him. He is the author of best-selling novels such as *One Night at the Call Center*, *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, *Two States*, *Revolution 2020*, and *Half Girlfriend*. Through his writings, he addresses critical issues including moral decline, the erosion of traditional values, corruption, and the various forms of exploitation rooted in capitalist culture. His novels also capture the struggles, dreams, and aspirations of Indian youth. In this sense, he serves as a voice for contemporary Indian youth and their concerns.

The present study intends to analyze the selected novel, *Revolution 2020*, from a Marxist perspective, focusing on the depiction of class struggle and the influence of economic structures on the socio-familial frameworks. It aims to illuminate the underlying class tensions and economic disparities, contributing to the reduction of class divisions and conflicts. Consequently, it holds significant value in raising awareness among the masses, fostering efforts to create a more just and exploitation-free society.

Literature Review

Marxism has gone through various developmental phases to evolve into its current form. Originating from Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* in the late 19th century, the ideology gained prominence as a political and social theory. In the early 20th century, Russian revolutionaries, led by Leon Trotsky, applied Marx's concepts to literary analysis. Theodor Adorno contributed significantly to early Marxist literary criticism, while the

Frankfurt School later sought to refine Marxist theory to resist the corruption of totalitarian regimes. Its influence surged during times of economic hardship, notably reaching its zenith in the aftermath of the Great Depression, but gradually declined afterward. It saw a revival in the 1960s amidst political upheavals such as the Vietnam War and the Cuban Missile Crisis. In modern times, Marxist criticism is diverse, with no singular definition of what constitutes a Marxist critic. Jameson (1974) contends that contemporary Marxism addresses the unique challenges posed by various socio-economic systems – feudalism, capitalism, imperialism, and socialism. He affirms that ‘there should exist several different Marxisms in the world of today, each answering the specific needs and problems of its own socio-economic system’ (1974, p. xviii).

Bhagat’s novel, *Revolution 2020* has been the subject of extensive research, with scholars approaching the novel from diverse analytical perspectives: Ali (2015) foregrounds rampant corruption in Indian education, politics and love in Chetan Bhagat’s *Revolution 2020*. He asserts that contemporary literature often centers on the younger generation, highlighting their creativity, ambition, and corruption. The central characters – Gopal, Raghav, and Aarti – pursue different paths after attempting the AIEEE exam. While Raghav succeeds and becomes a journalist, Gopal turns to corruption after meeting an MLA, and Aarti aspires to be an air hostess. Raghav becomes a journalist and exposes the widespread corruption in India’s private education system. In this endeavor, he faces constant obstacles. However, he succeeds in his mission in the long run.

Kulkarni (2016) highlights social realism in Bhagat’s *Revolution 2020*, focusing on its truthful portrayal of society. Social realism accentuates societal issues, often depicting the struggles of the youth. The author has used this technique to address the ambitions and challenges of the youth. He represents the moral decline of the Indian society through the characters. These characters confront issues including unemployment, corruption, and failures.

Raviya (2017) examines the representation of modern milieu in Bhagat’s *Revolution 2020*. The study explores the struggles of young Indians for their basic rights. It highlights Bhagat’s skill to voice the fears of the youth, particularly their struggles with the generation gap and social conflicts. It also spotlights the pathetic condition of the students due to undue pressures exerted by the education system.

Vasanthakumari and Kalaiselvi (2021) explore individual’s journey of self-discovery in Bhagat’s *Revolution 2020*. They assert that social criticism is central to his selected novel, focusing on societal reform. The author expertly depicts the harsh realities of a corrupt society. He highlights the efforts of social reformers to combat social evils. Through self-discovery and diligence, individuals can overcome the negative thoughts that perpetuate these social issues.

To sum up, Bhagat’s *Revolution 2020* has been the subject of various literary analyses. Some have focused on the challenges of the students and corruption prevalent in Indian educational system. Others have analyzed the themes of love and personal ambitions within a socio-political context. Despite these varied interpretations, there remains a research gap in examining the novel from a Marxist perspective, particularly in terms of its reflection on economic determinism and class struggle. Hence, the present study provides an opportunity for further investigation, allowing for a Marxist reading of the selected novel.

Research Methodology

The present study is a qualitative research, adopting an analytical, interpretive, and deductive approach. The theoretical framework is Marxist theory, the materialistic reading of literary works, uncovering underlying class struggles and contrapuntal patterns within the text. It is based upon the foundational concepts of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, emphasizing their insights into socio-economic forces that shape literature and its ideological implications. Through this perspective, the study intends to explore the driving force of economic structures in determining social dynamics, class struggle, and the exploitation of the marginalized.

Theoretical Framework

Marxism is a literary-cum-cultural theory that views social, cultural and political change in terms of economic factors. It embodies a set of socio-economic and political ideas that will enable its followers to interpret and change their state into an equitable and exploitation-free place to live. Rooted in materialist philosophy, Marxism views human history as a continuous struggle between opposing social classes. Marx and Engels (1888) assert that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (p. 14). This dialectic between the dominant and subjugated classes defines the trajectory of human progress, shaping economic systems and societal structures. Economic determinism, a core concept of Marxist theory, holds that material conditions – particularly the modes of production and the ownership of resources – determine the nature of social relations and class dynamics. The economic base of society fundamentally influences its superstructure, encompassing political, legal, and ideological institutions. The ownership of the means of production, concentrated in the hands of the ruling class, perpetuates exploitation and inequality, while the subjugated class, deprived of resources, remains locked in a cycle of oppression.

Marxism fundamentally opposes class division and critiques the capitalist system as inherently exploitative. Marxism emphasizes that capitalism thrives by extracting labor from the oppressed classes, with economic power concentrated in the hands of a few. The rise of industrialization led to the bifurcation of the class into two distinct groups: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie, as defined by Marx and Engels, are the owners of the means of production – factories, machinery, and resources essential for generating economic value. As they note, “the bourgeoisie, class of the big capitalists, who in all advanced countries are in almost exclusive possession of the means of subsistence and those means (machines, factories, workshops, etc.) by which these means of subsistence are produced” (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 38). On the other hand, the proletariat consists of the property-less laborers who are compelled to sell their labor in order to survive, both socially and economically. They are subjected to the demands of the bourgeoisie, often denied their fundamental rights and subjected to exploitation. Marx and Engels (1888) highlight this disparity, stating that “the propertyless must submit to the bad conditions laid down by the bourgeois” (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 38). Furthermore, they observe the erosion of workers’ independence, noting that “the workers were deprived of the last remnants of their independence” (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 38).

Moreover, Marx and Engels (1998) posit that the bourgeoisie treat the proletariat not as individuals but as mere objects or commodities, exploiting their labor for personal gain. They perceive “every other person in his sphere of action... as his object, his property, his creature” (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 313). This commodification of the proletariat, as outlined in Marx’s *Theories of Surplus-Value* (1863), is central to the functioning of capitalism. The bourgeoisie prioritize wealth accumulation over human welfare, leading to the exploitation of the working class. Marx (1863) observes that “the proletariat is sacrificed to wealth” (p. 420),

highlighting how workers are reduced to tools for generating profit, stripped of their humanity, and regarded as mere animals within the system of social relations. This intensifying disparity, where a few accumulate vast resources while the majority suffers, is a defining feature of economic determinism.

Marx and Engels (1888) also critique this concentration of productive forces in the hands of a few, observing that as bourgeois wealth increases, the proletariat's condition becomes "more wretched and intolerable" (p. 48). The progression of civilization, rather than alleviating exploitation, introduces "new classes, new conditions of oppression, [and] new forms of struggle" (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 14). A key contradiction in the capitalist system, as Marx and Engels note, is the concentration of private property in the hands of a few, while the vast majority is deprived of it. This inequality perpetuates a society in which "those who work, acquire nothing, and those who acquire anything do not work" (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 24), encapsulating the deep injustices inherent in the capitalist system.

Marx and Engels (1998), in *The German Ideology*, emphasize that the economy is not merely one aspect of society but the very bedrock from which all social relations and institutions evolve. They assert that "the social organization evolving directly out of production and intercourse... forms the basis of the state and of the rest of the idealistic superstructure" (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 98). This foundational relationship emphasizes the profound connection between existing social relations and the economic foundations of society, as they declare that "there lies the connection of all existing relations with the economic foundations of society" (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 438). They further argue that any alteration in the mode of production precipitates a transformation in the entire social system, asserting that "by actually changing the mode of production and the entire system based upon it can these contradictions be solved" (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 543). This assertion highlights the dynamic nature of economic determinism, wherein the economy not only influences but essentially dictates the structure and function of societal institutions.

Furthermore, the implications of economic determinism extend to familial relations, wherein Marx and Engels (1998) observe that "the existence of the family is made necessary by its connection with the mode of production" (p. 195). They critique bourgeois society, wherein "a will whose essential character and direction are determined by the economic conditions of existence" leads to distorted family dynamics (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 24). Historical changes in property relationships have modified familial bonds, resulting in the disintegration of the proletarian family unit. In this context, the ties that bind family members are increasingly frayed, and the children of the proletariat are objectified, as Marx and Engels (1888) contend that "all the family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour" (p. 25).

Moreover, Marx (1993), in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, elucidates the broader implications of economic conditions on individual consciousness and societal dynamics. He asserts that "the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life" (Marx, 1993, p. 4). This observation encapsulates the essence of economic determinism: it is not the consciousness of individuals that shapes their existence, but rather their material conditions that mold their consciousness. He further elaborates that changes in the economic foundation inevitably lead to the transformation of the entire superstructure, reinforcing the notion that economic relations dictate social, political, and intellectual developments.

In addition, Marx (1891), in *Wage Labour and Capital*, reiterates this perspective, emphasizing that “the relations of production in their totality constitute what is called the social relations, society” (p. 19). This assertion encapsulates the core of economic determinism, which maintains that the structure of society is fundamentally shaped by the prevailing economic relations, leading to distinctive characteristics at various stages of historical development. Similarly, Marx and Engels (1887) in *Capital* (vol. I) argue that economy forms social, juridical, political and intellectual superstructure. It also forms the ideology of a person. They maintain:

The economic structure of society, is the real basis on which the juridical and political superstructure is raised and to which definite social forms of thought correspond; that the mode of production determines the character of the social, political, and intellectual life generally, all this is very true for our own times.... (Marx & Engels, 1887, p. 58).

Bourgeois society is fundamentally rooted in monetary interests, leading to pervasive economic competition among its members. In this context, individuals are willing to go to great lengths to secure their economic position. Marx and Engels (1998) note that “the bourgeois state, owing to their whole material basis, cannot permit any struggle among the citizens except the struggle of competition” (p. 382). Similarly, Marx (1891), in *Wage Labor and Capital*, observes that “there arises among the capitalists a universal rivalry for the increase of the division of labor and machinery, and for their exploitation on the greatest possible scale” (p. 27).

As a solution to the exploitative capitalist system, Marx and Engels (1888) articulate a vision for a communist society wherein individuals can fully realize their capabilities and powers in an environment of complete freedom, without violating the foundational conditions of that society. They assert that the function of Communism is “to organize society in such a way that every member of it can develop and use all his capabilities and powers in complete freedom” (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 37). This vision reflects their belief that the existing economic structures perpetuate systemic inequalities and limit individual potential. They contend that the root cause of societal evils lies in the economic realm, and thus, for a communist society to emerge, these foundations must be dismantled. They state, “the commune was therefore to serve as a lever for uprooting the economical foundation upon which rests the existence of classes, and therefore of class rule” (Marx & Engels, 1888, p. 62). This assertion highlights their conviction that transforming the economic base is essential for abolishing class distinctions and achieving genuine social equality.

To sum up, Marx and Engels elucidate how economic conditions form the basis of societal structures, familial relations, and individual consciousness, asserting that any change in the economic foundation precipitates a comprehensive transformation of the social superstructure. They also emphasize the profound impact of economic relations on individual agency and societal structure, advocating for a revolutionary transformation of these foundations to facilitate the realization of a classless, communist society. This Marxist theoretical framework would help facilitate the textual analysis of Bhagat’s *Revolution 2020*.

Textual Analysis

Bhagat (2011), in *Revolution 2020*, delineates the class differences and their profound impact on the lives of the characters. He reveals how economic forces shape socio-familial

dynamics. The three central characters – Aarti, Raghav, and Gopal – are the representatives of different socioeconomic strata. Aarti, who hails from an affluent background, enjoys numerous privileges by virtue of her father's high-ranking position as the District Magistrate (DM). Her elevated status is illustrated when Gopal is taken to her bungalow in the DM's official car with a red light atop. The experience of being transported in this vehicle leaves Gopal in awe, as he muses, "traffic eases, policemen salute you for no reason, and you start to wonder if civil service is where you should be" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 96). The respect and privileges Aarti receives are not due to her individual merits but stem from her father's socio-economic influence. Even tuition centers waive her fees, anticipating favors from her father, illustrating the transactional nature of societal privileges in a class-stratified society.

Raghav also belongs to a well-to-do family. His family supports him both emotionally and financially, enabling him to secure a high position in the AIEEE (All India Engineering Entrance Exam). Gopal, on the contrary, comes from a financially weaker background, and despite a respectable performance in the entrance exams, his results do not elicit the same admiration. This disparity is vividly captured in Gopal's internal monologue after the results, when he reflects on the contrasting treatment he receives compared to Raghav. He admits, "never in my life had I felt so small. I felt like a beggar hanging out with kings" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 30). The weight of his lower social standing becomes even more apparent when he hides his tears and leaves Raghav's house in shame. When Raghav tries to console him, offering to accompany Gopal to break the news of his results to his father, Gopal declines, remarking, "don't worry. He's faced worse things in life" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 31). The strained relationship between Gopal and his father, rooted in their financial difficulties, reveals how economic status dictates the emotional landscape of familial relationships. He dreads telling his father, who, despite his aged face and wrinkles around his eyes, exhibits a momentary brightness in his gaze, filled with hope. Upon hearing Gopal's failure to crack the exams, the disappointment is palpable in his father's expression, as if saying, "I brought you up, now see what you have done" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 32).

The theme of economic determinism is further reinforced when Gopal calls Aarti, only to be met with her mother's condescending tone. Aarti's mother, belonging to a higher socio-economic stratum due to her husband's position as District Magistrate (DM), treats Gopal with disdain. He notes that "her husband might be the DM, but she had more attitude than him" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 71), signifying how economic privilege breeds arrogance. Their conversation becomes a microcosm of the larger class distinction in society. She belittles Gopal's academic and economic standing by comparing him to Raghav, urging him to study hard so that he too can attend a prestigious college and enjoy the same privileges as Raghav. She tells him: "you can also be in a proper college and have fun like Raghav" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 72). This serves as a stark reminder of the class divide that separates Gopal from Raghav.

Moreover, Gopal's internal comparison with Raghav further emphasizes class difference. He realizes that Aarti is more likely to choose Raghav because of his better future prospects, a reality he begrudgingly accepts: "Raghav has better future prospects" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 72). Aarti herself acknowledges her preference for Raghav, stating, "accept Raghav and me" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 85). She admires his ambition to make a difference in the world: "He's a great guy, Gopal. You should see him, how much he wants to do for the world" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 85). This preference is not just based on affection but also on the socio-economic stability and ambition. As economic fortunes shift, so does Aarti's allegiance. Initially drawn to Raghav due to his wealth and promising future, she gravitates towards Gopal once he amasses significant wealth, acquiring a luxurious lifestyle marked by a Mercedes and an opulent bungalow. Gopal, driven by a deep-seated rivalry, revels in his newfound status and

muses, “well, soon I’ll make your girlfriend mine. The girl you stole from me” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 245). His comment reflects not only personal resentment but also the role economic power plays in shaping intimate relationships. The competitive dynamic between Gopal and Raghav, once close friends, highlights how economic disparity fuels envy and animosity. As Raghav’s financial situation deteriorates, Gopal, who once envied Raghav’s higher status, now basks in his rival’s misfortune. His desire to see Raghav humbled by economic necessity is clear when he arrogantly admits, “I wished he would come and beg me on bended knees” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 249). The shift in their relationship from friendship to rivalry is a reflection of how economic changes can drastically alter social dynamics.

Moreover, Gopal’s growing materialism is evident in his conversations with Aarti. He dismisses her dreams of becoming an airhostess, instead boasting about his wealth and future prospects. He arrogantly suggests that he could buy a plane for her and outlines a grand vision of their future, where their children will inherit his business and political empire, cementing their status as part of India’s elite. His dreams reflect the bourgeois obsession with wealth and power as measures of success, where personal ambitions are overshadowed by the pursuit of material dominance. This narrative highlights how the author critiques the way capitalist society distorts human relationships, reducing them to transactional exchanges driven by economic gain. Gopal’s growing wealth transforms not only his social status but also his sense of self-worth and entitlement.

Bhagat (2011) holds that the affluent flaunt their riches to assert dominance to gain respect. Gopal, once a poor and powerless figure, seeks to display his newfound wealth to Raghav, asking for tea to be served in special bone china cups. Similarly, Gopal’s order to the security guards to “stand straight and salute all the guests” reveals how social deference is commanded not by virtue but by wealth and status (Bhagat, 2011, p. 164). The capitalist hierarchy reinforces the idea that those with power deserve automatic respect, while the poor are marginalized. This is exemplified by Gopal’s reflection: “money, status and power – however evil people may say these are – get you respect in life” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 207).

Furthermore, Bhagat (2011) shows how economic forces shape and often distort socio-familial relationships. The strained relationship between Gopal’s father and his uncle (Taya-ji) highlights the corrosive power of money. His Taya-ji deceitfully secures a bank loan by mortgaging his brother’s half of the property, manipulating paperwork, and bribing officials. Although they are bound by blood, financial interests sever their familial ties, replacing kinship with animosity. The intrusion of monetary concerns creates a deep rift between them, with Taya-ji prioritizing profit over family. Further highlighting this, Dubey uncle, a lawyer, makes an insulting offer of ten lakhs for fifteen acres of land. Gopal’s father, firmly rooted in his identity as a farmer’s son, is outraged, declaring, “I’m a farmer’s son. I’m not giving up my land. Not until I die. Tell him to kill me if he wants the land” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 15). His tears reflect a profound emotional conflict, where the pain of losing a brother outweighs the potential loss of property, highlighting how deeply money has tainted personal relationships. In addition, Taya-ji’s cold calculation continues as he avoids attending court hearings, believing that his brother’s death will simplify the legal process. Gopal’s father bleakly acknowledges this, stating, “I think he feels I will die soon. It will be easier to resolve afterwards, anyway” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 95). Thus, the narrative, through these instances, poignantly captures how economy erodes both familial bonds and moral integrity.

Gopal’s uncle, who has long exploited his family through a bitter land dispute, hypocritically appears at his father’s deathbed, feigning sympathy. His apparent concern is merely a strategic move to seize whatever remains of the family’s property. Similarly, Neeta Tayi-ji

displays insincere motherly affection, shedding crocodile tears over Gopal's loss, motivated more by greed than genuine sorrow. This duplicitous behavior highlights the predatory nature of relationships in a capitalist society, where personal connections are often tainted by economic self-interest. The land dispute, a symbol of the ongoing economic battle, culminates when Shukla's men intervene to settle the matter. However, instead of offering resolution, they coerce Gopal and his uncle into selling the disputed land for a mere eight lakhs, resorting to violence and intimidation to secure the deal. Ghanshyam, who spent years in teasing Gopal's family, now finds himself helpless before the ruthless agents of Shukla-ji, a wealthier and more powerful figure. This sequence highlights the brutal reality of the capitalist system, where larger forces exploit the vulnerable and even familial ties are sacrificed on the altar of economic gain.

Bhagat (2011) also offers a stark critique of how economic forces permeate the healthcare department. When Gopal's father learns he needs surgery, he bitterly remarks that doctors today are driven by profit, not by a sense of duty to humanity. His disillusionment reflects the broader capitalist ethos, where profit-seeking undermines the moral obligations of medical profession. He cynically remarks, "doctors want more business these days, what else?" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 103), highlighting the commodification of healthcare in a bourgeois society. Ultimately, this exploitative system takes its toll on Gopal's father, whose inability to cope with his son's academic failure and mounting debts results in his demise. He, left grief-stricken, laments, "I had become an orphan" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 108), revealing how the harsh realities of economic hardship transcend personal resilience and family bonds.

Bhagat (2011) also illustrates how the capitalist system continues to affect death rituals. In the sacred city of Varanasi, traditionally believed to be a gateway to Heaven for those who die there, death itself has become a flourishing industry. Funeral services, including firewood and priests, are monetized to "ensure the dead person departs with dignity" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 109). The commercialization of funeral rites in Varanasi highlights the pervasive nature of capitalism, where even the most sacred rituals are reduced to transactional exchanges. The author emphasizes this grim reality by stating, "the death industry drives the city" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 109), and despondently observes, "Varanasi is probably the only city on earth where Death is a tourist attraction" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 109). The commodification of death serves as a powerful metaphor for how deeply entrenched economy is in this society. Gopal's grief is compounded by the financial negotiations that follow, as even his father's cremation becomes a matter of economic bargaining. The priest demands ten thousand rupees for conducting the funeral rites, but after haggling, agrees to seven thousand – a stark reminder of how even moments of profound sorrow are tainted by financial transactions. The choice of electric cremation, a cheaper alternative, highlights Gopal's economic limitations, further illustrating how poverty shapes every decision, even in death.

Bhagat (2011) explores how education functions as a transformative force within a capitalist society, often acting as a determinant of one's social and economic route. Gopal's experience highlights the stark reality of this system. Reflecting on his failure in the AIEEE, he laments, "one stupid exam, half a dozen mistakes in multiple choice problems had changed my life" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 32). His modest results are not just an academic disappointment but a personal and familial catastrophe. His father, having invested all his life's savings into his education, becomes a silent witness to this collapse, deepening his sense of shame and failure. This economic burden leaves him grappling with despair, as he contemplates extreme measures like "suicide, penance in the Himalayas or a life of drudgery as a labourer" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 32). The weight of his failure is further compounded by his class position, which manifests acutely in his relationship with Raghav, his friend who succeeds in the JEE (Joint

Entrance Exam). Though Gopal outwardly congratulates Raghav, inwardly he is consumed by jealousy, admitting, “true, I did not feel any happiness about his JEE selection” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 39). The gap between them is not just academic but deeply socio-economic, as evidenced by Mr. Kashyap’s dismissive attitude toward Gopal. Gopal, painfully aware of this dynamic, observes that “I’m sure if I had had a rank, he would have stood up and shook hands with me” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 39), revealing how social respect and recognition are contingent upon one’s educational and economic success.

Bhagat (2011) holds that education, rather than being a means of personal or intellectual growth, becomes a tool for reinforcing class distinctions, with success breeding selfishness and exacerbating the divide between the haves and have-nots. Gopal’s reflections highlight a broader critique of capitalist society, where material success elevates one’s social status and transforms one’s identity. He muses that achieving high exam ranks is akin to being “turned from coal to diamond in a day” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 39), signifying how economic achievement can instantly redefine one’s worth. This commodification of success fosters a sense of self-obsession among those who attain it. As Gopal notes, “when people achieve something, they become self-obsessed” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 40). He bitterly observes that success is reserved for those born into privilege, stating, “my dad is not in the IAS. My grandfather was not a minister. We are from a simple Indian family” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 36). His father, driven by desperation to secure his son’s future, sacrifices everything, selling his own gold band and his wife’s jewelry to fund Gopal’s education in the hope that becoming an engineer will lift them out of financial hardship. Through Gopal’s narrative, the author critiques the capitalist model of education, where one’s future and dignity are tied to material outcomes, perpetuating a cycle of inequality and social stratification.

Vineet, one of Gopal’s peers, critiques the exploitative nature of India’s educational system. His bitter reflection exposes the grim reality of a capitalist society where only the affluent can afford the luxury of higher education and professional advancement. He asserts: “If his family is rich, he can do MBA after BTech and find some job. And if he does not have a high-class family, he will sink away as pebbles do into the Ganga” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 107). In this way, the author portrays education as a system rigged in favor of the bourgeoisie, leaving the less fortunate to languish. The economic disparity inherent in the educational system is further criticized by Sunil, who points out the divide between the capitalist class that owns educational institutions and the proletariat class that simply passes through them. He mockingly declares, “stupid people go to college. Smart people own them” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 120), thus laying bare the commodification of education in a capitalist society.

Bhagat (2011) maintains that the Indian educational system is deliberately kept complex to favor corrupt politicians. Shukla-ji, the MLA himself admits that if the system were straightforward, “every professor and company will open institutions,” but this structure allows the political elite to maintain control (Bhagat, 2011, p. 166). The complexity of the system benefits politicians, who profit from controlling approvals and permits. Gopal and Shukla-ji bribe a variety of officials to secure the necessary approvals for their college, from the VNN’s land zoning permit to the AICTE and UGC inspectors. As Gopal navigates these obstacles, he realizes the scale of corruption, counting at least thirty people he has had to bribe in the process. His frustration becomes evident when Aarti asks when the college will start, and he sarcastically replies, “when we manage to please every Indian government official on this earth” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 169). He estimates that the amount of over seventy-two lacs is involved in bribery. Bedi casually refers to bribery as “standard,” emphasizing how corruption is normalized as part of doing business in India (Bhagat, 2011, p. 126).

Shukla-ji's personal journey reflects the connection between power, money, and social status in a capitalist society. He recalls how he used to sleep on railway platforms before starting his political career, but within six months, he had accumulated significant wealth and influence. His advice to Gopal to marry Aarti, the daughter of a District Magistrate and granddaughter of an ex-minister, highlights the importance of strategic alliances in consolidating power. Shukla-ji's belief in the "perfect combination" of politician, businessman, and educationist encapsulates the way power, money, and respect are interwoven in this system (Bhagat, 2011, p. 256). The inauguration of Gopal's college is emblematic of the intersection between wealth, power, and politics. Shukla-ji, a politician deeply entrenched in corruption, invites the Chief Minister and other dignitaries to the event, spending lavishly on full-page newspaper ads and orchestrating a grand display of influence. The author points out that "the aura of power could be sensed along every inch of the MLA's bungalow" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 238).

Bhagat (2011) also explores the constraints placed on journalistic freedom within a capitalist and corrupt system, reflecting the novel's critique of economic determinism. During Raghav's internship at a newspaper, he quickly realizes that his revolutionary ideas and investigative journalism are unwelcome. Aarti notes that "they found his articles too radical and different" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 97), indicating that Raghav's attempts to challenge the status quo are suppressed by the editorial board. Even though the magazine's tagline is "Shake the world," a clear nod to its supposed radical stance, Raghav is denied the opportunity to write freely. He concedes his frustration, stating, "they are not letting me write, even though tame stuff" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 154). It reveals the limitations imposed by the publication, which operates within the confines of a system that serves those in power.

Raghav, rejecting this system, openly declares, "I can't be part of a corrupt enterprise" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 163), as he critiques the very structures that uphold the status quo. He exposes Shukla-ji's involvement in dubious property investments, including the very college Gopal is connected to, as well as his misappropriation of funds from the Ganga Action Plan. In an act of defiance, Raghav publishes an article in *Dainik* titled "New engineering college opens in city – with corruption money" on the day of the college's inauguration, uncovering the corrupt practices behind its establishment and Shukla-ji's role in the scandal. This bold move costs Raghav his job. The newspaper administration, under pressure from powerful interests, fires him from his job despite acknowledging his talent as a star reporter. Shukla-ji, enraged by Raghav's exposure of his corrupt dealings, swears revenge, vowing to "fuck his happiness" (Bhagat, 2011, p. 191). Through Raghav's struggles, the author critiques the way capitalism and corruption stifle journalistic integrity and free speech.

Raghav's determination to dismantle the corrupt system and instigate change is a key element of the novel. His vision of a revolution by 2020 is the belief that power will eventually shift into the hands of the youth, who will reject the entrenched corruption of the current regime. Through his magazine, *Revolution 2020*, he strives to awaken the masses by exposing the widespread corruption that permeates Indian society. His articles uncover the everyday injustices of black-market activities, illegal sales of LPG cylinders, and bribes taken by RTO officers, accentuating how deep-rooted corruption extends into the fabric of daily life.

Raghav's most significant expose is Shukla-ji, a politician whose wealth is built on siphoning public funds and exploiting the poor. In an article titled 'MLA makes money by making Holy River filthy!' Raghav reveals that Shukla-ji pocketed a staggering 20 crores out of the 25 crores sanctioned for the Dimnapura Sewage Treatment Plant, meant to clean the sacred Ganges. This embezzlement reflects the systemic greed that perpetuates the degradation of the environment for profit. Raghav also unveils how Shukla-ji profits from the desperation of

the poor, acting as a silent benefactor to loan sharks who exploit borrowers with usurious interest rates. As Gopal remarks, “I didn’t realize that the loan sharks operate with the MLA’s blessings” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 124), highlighting how Shukla-ji’s reach extends into every corner of economic exploitation.

On the other side of the system, Gopal and Shukla-ji manipulate the media, using their wealth to craft favorable public images. They bribe news agencies to run advertisements and publish positive articles about their ventures. Amar Trivedi, the marketing head of *Varanasi Times*, exemplifies how journalism is co-opted by capitalist interests. He offers Gopal and Shukla-ji a deal, stating, “for a little extra fee we publish positive articles about your college. We get news, you get an image. It is a win-win partnership” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 179). This transactional relationship between media and power further illustrates how the bourgeoisie control public perception through wealth. Gopal’s critique of *Dainik* captures the hypocrisy at play when he points out, “college made with corrupt money! You have made money from us too” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 179), exposing how even media outlets benefit from the corrupt system they occasionally criticize.

The characters, in the novel, are deeply disillusioned with the capitalist system, which they view as a corrupt force that poisons social relationships, exploits the proletariat, and erodes socio-ethical values. They denounce it as an unfair and blood-sucking system, desiring to dismantle and replace it. Among them, Raghav stands out as the most radical in his determination to challenge and uproot this exploitative structure. He critiques power-driven societies, likening them to animalistic systems where “might is right” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 243). He envisions a society where “truth, justice, and equality are respected more than power,” asserting that such values are the foundation of societal progress (Bhagat, 2011, p. 243).

Drawing from Marxist ideology, the novel emphasizes revolution as the only solution to systemic corruption, though it acknowledges that revolution requires sacrifice. Raghav argues that change must begin at the individual level, stating that “revolution begins at home,” challenging family norms and entrenched social conventions (Bhagat, 2011, p. 149). Gopal, initially a participant in the corrupt system, grows weary of its dehumanizing effects and decides to join Raghav in the fight for a peaceful, equitable, and progressive society. He hopefully proclaims that “the revolution will come” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 295). It is validated by Raghav who believes that “we’ll have a better nation one day” (Bhagat, 2011, p. 295). Both of them are determined to build a nation where human dignity supersedes economic interests. Despite numerous obstacles under the corrupt system, Raghav remains steadfast, ultimately succeeding in his quest to dismantle the exploitative structure and envisioning a future where human values triumph over economic greed.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Marxist study of Chetan Bhagat’s *Revolution 2020* highlights that economic base determines the superstructure. The capitalist system is extremely exploitative and unstable structure. In this system, the relentless pursuit of wealth leads to the deterioration of locally valued socio-ethical forms. It fosters a society rife with corruption, inequality, and moral degradation. The study shows how capitalism extends beyond mere economic transactions, infiltrating human relationships, education, and personal ambitions, trapping individuals in cycles of exploitation. Despite this bleak portrayal, the study also offers a glimmer of hope. Individuals like Raghav embody resistance and hope, challenging the oppressive capitalist system and striving for societal change. Their indomitable will to combat exploitation and inequality signals that revolution and reforms are possible.

Ultimately, it not only critiques the corrosive effects of capitalism but also highlights the potential for transformation through collective action and moral courage. It envisions a path toward resistance, where committed individuals can break free from the clutches of exploitation and work towards a society rooted in justice, equality and prosperity.

References

- Ali, C. (2015). Rampant corruption in Indian education, politics and love in Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020*. *Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 4(2), 5-15.
- Bhagat, C. (2005). *One night at the call center*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
- Bhagat, C. (2008). *The three mistakes of my life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
- Bhagat, C. (2009). *Two states*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
- Bhagat, C. (2011). *Revolution 2020*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
- Bhagat, C. (2014). *Half girlfriend*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
- Bottomore, T. (1983). *A dictionary of Marxist thought* (2nd Ed.). Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Eagleton, T. (2002). *Marxism and literary criticism* (3rd Ed.). London: Routledge Classics. p. 65
- Jameson, F. (1974). *Marxism and form: Twentieth-century dialectical theories of literature*. USA: Princeton University Press.
- Kulkarni, D. S. (2016). Social realism: representation of problems of youth and fraudulent society in Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020*. *An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 1(2), 1-5.
- Lang, B. & Williams, F. (1972). *Marxism and art: Writing in aesthetics and criticism*. London: Longman Publishing Group.
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1887). *Capital* (vol. 1). (S. Moore & E. Aveling, Trans.). Moscow: Progress Publishers. (Original work published 1867).
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1888). *Manifesto of the communist party*. (S. Moore & F. Engels, Trans.). Moscow: Progress Publishers. (Original work published 1848).
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1998). *The German ideology*. New York: Prometheus Books.
- Marx, K. (1863). *Theories of surplus-value (Vol. IV of Capital)*. (J. Huato, Trans.). Moscow: Progress Publishers. (Original work published 1863).
- Marx, K. (1891). *Wage labour and capital*. (F. Engels, Trans.). Moscow: Progress Publishers. (Original work published 1891).
- Marx, K. (1993). *A contribution to critique of political economy*. (S.W. Ryazanskaya, Trans.). Moscow: Progress Publishers. (Original work published 1859).
- Ratcliff, A. (2017, January 16). Just eight men own same wealth as half the world. Retrieved from <https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2017-01-16/just-8-men-own-same-wealth-half-world>
- Raviya, H. D. (2017). Representation of modern milieu in Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020*. *Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 8(1), 1184-1194.
- Vasanthakumari, T., & Kalaiselvi, K. (2022). A Journey of self-discovery in Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020*. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(4), 2940-2944.