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Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020*: A Love Triangle, Corruption, Moral Perversion and a Journey of Self Identification

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The novel is set against the background of the city Varanasi and the story is narrated to us when Gopal, the chief character, in the state of being drunk, recalls his past experiences and events of his life and shares it with the Author, Chetan Bhagat who is on a visit to Ganga Tech college, to deliver a speech. The novel is primarily concerned with Gopal's love for Aarti. It is a story of love, deceit, corruption, moral perversion, success, defeat and sacrifice. Gopal, a poor fellow, comes from a poor family. Gopal's mother dies at a very early stage of his life, thus depriving him of motherly affections. He is brought up by his father, who lacks sufficient money, to provide Gopal with a lavish lifestyle and a comfortable living. Not only this, there is a discord between him and his elder brother on property issues. As Gopal narrates his story, he becomes nostalgic of his childhood;

"I wondered if I could give some laddoos to drama queen Aarti as compensation for the cake. I wanted to buy a chocolate cake and slam it on her desk. However, I didn't have money for that. My father didn't give me any pocket money, and he didn't have much money in his own pocket. My mother's illness had wiped out all his savings. She died two weeks after I turned four. I don't remember much of her or her death. Baba did say he had to wear her dupatta and sleep next to me for a month. After her death the land dispute started. Dubey uncle had become a frequent visitor to our house for this reason. 'You brought sweets only because we have a hearing?' Baba coughed. The case had not given his land back to him, but it did worsen his respiratory ailment. . . . Ghanshyam Taya-ji, my father's respected elder brother, had screwed us. My grandfather had left his two sons thirty acres of agricultural land on the Lucknow Highway, to be divided equally. Soon after my grandfather's death, Ghanshyam uncle took a loan from the bank and mortgaged Baba's half of the property, forging the papers with wrong plot numbers and bribing the bank officer". His friend Raghav belongs to a family with a humble and economically fair background, while his beloved Aarti, who is also his best friend, belongs to the upper class and a prosperous family. Gopal is no alien to the hardships in life, whether it is getting through exams like AIEEE, NITS, IITS or winning the love of his heart's throb Aarti. Raghav, on the other side, is intent upon fighting against the corruption and wrongs in society. He is a rebel who wants to stand up against the wrong system. In Gopal's speech we see from the very beginning, Raghav as a revolutionary figure. A person who has infinite capacity to bring about a positive change. As we read in the text; "Why BHU? Gopal asked Raghav, "I want to do Journalism part-time, I have contacts in newspapers here," Raghav said.

'You will give up an IIT for a hobby?' Gopal asked.

"It is not a hobby. Journalism is my passion'. 'Why are you doing engineering then? Dad. Why else, oh, I have told him, I am taking BHU because I will get a better branch like computer science'".

Aarti is an admiring, alluring, fun-loving and physically attractive girl. She has looks to die for, and a captivating personality. It is the charm of her personality, that Gopal finds hard to resist and falls deeply in love with her. In Gopal's speech we get a description of her personality; "However, two years ago when she turned fifteen, the whole school started

talking about her. Statements such as ‘the most beautiful girl in Sunbeam school’, ‘She should be an actress; or ‘she can apply for Miss India’, became increasingly common. Some of it came from people trying to please her. After all, a senior IAS officer father and a prominent politician grandfather meant people wanted to be in her good books.” These lines clearly tell us about her glamorous personality and charismatic looks.. The three are the best of friends in spite of their class differences. They are childhood friends. The novel holds our attention when we come to know about Gopal’s love for Aarti almost to the point of madness, and Aarti’s relationship with Raghav. It is here that the novel gets gripping, arouses our curiosity and we remain engrossed into the events of the novel. Gopal believes that getting a good grade in IITS or AIEEE, would make Aarti fall in love with him. This is the chief reason, that decisions of Gopal fall many levels down, and he uses inappropriate methods to become rich, which is quite masterfully brought out by the author as the story progresses. The events that take place in the novel reflect the state of countless no of students who are forced to live the dream of their parents, and pursue a career not of their own interest but their parents. Same happens with Gopal. After failing both the IIT, JEE and AIEEE, Gopal goes to Kota, for coaching, to be in his father’s good books, who is hell-bent on to see Gopal as an engineer. Gopal comes under pressure from all the sides, as his father spends all his savings and takes loan from the bank to pay the coaching fee. Gopal wants Aarti to become his, she repeatedly refuses him, and the unrequited love further adds to his frustration. While Gopal is away in Kota, Aarti and Raghav come close to each other and start dating each other. This outcome of Gopal Aarti relationship creates tension between Aarti and Gopal’s friendship. Gopal gets mentally deranged and is heartbroken. Partly due to the unrequited love, Gopal again fails to get the good rank in exams. The shock seems to be too big to his father who dies leaving Gopal an orphan. The next happenings in the novel focus on the “corruption and ambition”. Gopal enters into a meaningless competition with Raghav, who is not aware of the fact that his childhood friend harbours jealousy against him. Gopal wants to prove Aarti that he is better than Raghav and contrives a plan in his mind to take revenge. It is at this critical point in the novel, he meets powerful, influential MLA, Shukla. They hold a meeting and decide to construct an engineering college on his father’s disputed land. Shukla agrees to provide him with the political and economical support. Finally a new engineering college, by the name of “Ganga Tech” is built up and Gopal is made the director of the college. Only thing that matters to Gopal at this stage in the novel is that he is going to defeat Raghav with money, no matter how it came by hook or by crook. Raghav completes his course of study from IT-BHU Varanasi. He rejects a very bright career in order to follow his passion, which is Journalism. He gets linked up with a local newspaper and starts working with great enthusiasm, fervour and uprightness. He wants to bring about a positive change by his abilities. The character of Aarti is a bit difficult to grasp. She is in a relationship with Raghav, but we see her inclination towards Gopal, when he is a wealthy man. Gopal finally gets what he wants; As he narrates his meeting with Aarti in a hotel room; “We turned to the tv screen. One night Sally was feeling low. Harry comes over to her house. He comforts her. They end up kissing. I don’t know if the scene motivated me or the wine or the fact that I felt I might not get another chance. I leaned over to kiss Aarti. She looked up at me in surprise. However she did not protest. Just stared. I kissed her again, this time more insistently. Nothing for two minutes and then she was kissing me back. We kissed again and again. I kissed her lips, her cheeks, her forehead, her nose, her ears and her lips again. I switched off the lights”.

Raghav joins as a trainee reporter, well approved newspaper “Dainik”. He begins his mission against corruption, by writing and publishing a report against Ganga Tech college in which he condemns, criticizes Shukla on the charges of corruption. Shukla however quite

skillfully, using his power manages to remove Raghav from his position. This does not stop Raghav's intense fervor to fight corruption. To carry his mission on, he lays foundation of his own newsletter called, 'Revolution 2020'. Gopal soon realises his mistake. He helps Raghav in getting back his old position. He sorts out things between Raghav and Aarti. In the end of the novel, Gopal says; 'Raghav's contesting. His picture is on election posters all over the city,' Gopal said. 'It could have been you. How do you feel about that?' I said. Gopal shrugged. 'He'll be a better MLA than me. What would I have done? Made more money. With him, there is a chance he could change something.' Gopal seems to be satisfied that Raghav can be a more effective politician than him, and can certainly transform, redefine, redesign and reconstruct things for better. These lines of Gopal quoted above, clearly show his development as a character and make him the hero of the novel. He learns from his mistakes and wrong judgements and becomes a better and a more insightful human being. He gains a new perspective on life. He does not regret his decision of giving Raghav a chance and letting Aarti go. He is satisfied over the state of things.

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