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AARTI'S EMOTIONAL STRUGGLE IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S REVOLUTION 2020

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Abstract

Revolution 2020 is a contemporary novel written by Chetan Bhagat. The novel explores various themes like corruption, ambition, love and emotions.

The thought process of Aarti serves as a tool to exhibit the social condition of women in the society. She is found to be surrounded by various feelings such as love, guilt and fear of judgement, which can be seen in many women in the present situation. The theme of activism and emotional idealism gives a chance to the author to exhibit the atrocities that happen in the society in the form of corruption and other illegal means. Bhagat justifies the fact that only emotional resilience will keep people grounded in this realm.

Keywords: Chetan Bhagat, Emotions, Emotional struggle, Isolation, Fear, Indian Writing, Fiction, History, Literature

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Aarti is witnessed to have mixed feelings of friendship and love with Gopal. Her loneliness and lack of attention from Raghav makes her closer to Gopal. Raghav is found to prioritize his passion to fight against corruption than the love for Aarti. Gopal's envy towards Raghav makes him to choose the immoral path for success. He uses this victory to persuade Aarti. Raghav's commitment for his passion seconds Aarti and makes her feel insecure. Betrayal is seen when Gopal compromises his innocence. A sense of guilt also engulfs him when he witnesses the sufferings of Raghav for revealing the truth. Gopal perceives betrayal with Aarti when she chooses Raghav to be her life partner. A similar feeling is evident with Aarti when she finds Raghav to be more inclined towards his passion than her.

Her feelings of love can be witnessed with both Gopal and Raghav. Her inner struggle to cope with the situation covers most part of the novel. Her love can be witnessed as a youthful romance with Raghav, but his commitment towards his passion of journalism makes her feel isolated and neglected. This ultimately leads in frustration making her to turn her attention to Gopal seeking consolation for her helpless situation. Her eventual return to Raghav showcases her emotional growth and her ability to accept him with his imperfections. He is found to express his emotions poetically, which impresses Aarti to a great extent. It is his failure to prioritise their relationship creates conflict between them, and Aarti starts feeling that she is being neglected. He was able to realise Aarti's love only after losing her, then he tries to understand his emotional shortcomings. This best pictures the fact how love can change the character of a person.

Aarti is observed to struggle between both the characters of Gopal and Raghav. She achieves satisfaction when she spends time with Gopal, and her romantic relationship with Raghav gives a sense of relief and emotional satisfaction. Both these satisfactions do not seem to last longer. When she gets into relationship with Raghav, her bonding with Gopal breaks, and Raghav's deep inclination towards his passion makes her to lose the integrity in their relationship. Her secret meetings with Gopal provide her a temporary sense of warmth and satisfaction. She feels that interactions with Gopal satisfies her emotions since Raghav failed to prioritise their relationship. However, she finds herself tinted with guilt and confusion after getting too close to Gopal. Her final decision of getting married to Raghav provides her a sense of relief and external satisfaction since this decision would give her social acceptance and a formidable life.

Fear of loneliness and uncertainty is distinct with Aarti who appears to be profoundly emotional in the narrative. She becomes restless about being misunderstood during her struggle between the love of Raghav and Gopal. She persistently avoids hurting both of them and tries to console them with her love and affection. Her anxiety is visible during the occasion when she meets Gopal secretly during her romantic relationship with Raghav, which stages her instable mindset. This comes from her fear of losing Raghav's relationship and her fear of emotional emptiness. Another disturbing factor for Aarti seems to be her apprehension about social judgment. She makes her meetings with Gopal secret because of her concern that she might be labelled unfaithful. This is evident through the words of Gopal that "She told me she hadn't even told Raghav she was meeting me, so there was no question of telling him anything. That's what human relationships are about - selective sharing and hiding of information to the point of crazy confusion" (*Revolution*, 184). She struggles between her love for Raghav and her emotional closeness with Gopal and is surrounded by the fear of making wrong decision. She finally decides to marry Raghav to come out of her fear and to maintain her integrity. Her internal emotional conflict is depicted by Bhagat eloquently and impactfully throughout the novel.

Struggling between Gopal and love for Raghav, Aarti undergoes intense emotional pain for the most part of the novel. Nervousness becomes a routine for her after she starts meeting Gopal in secrecy. Specifically, this is evidenced when she goes out with Gopal to celebrate her birthday without the knowledge of Raghav. She struggles to cope up with the situation, and she is surrounded by guilt and anxiety – "It's not easy being a girl. We feel guilty about everything" (*Revolution*, 227). She finds herself seized between affection of Gopal and loyalty for Raghav. This is obvious when she finds it difficult to take decisions and when her voice trembles. This emotional conflict creates suspense and tension to the readers making the story more interesting and thrilling. Her relationship with Raghav also becomes stressful, when she finds him to be always preoccupied with his job. It makes her feel neglected and loneliness surrounds her resulting in her plea for attention. This situation largely affects their relationship resulting in her search for consolation through other means – "I am lonely too, Gopal, she said, so lonely!" (*Revolution*, 219). This pictures how emotional neglect becomes the basis of stress.

Aarti's disgust and frustration intensifies when Gopal loves her even after knowing that she is in relationship with Raghav. This gets intensified with the emotional negligence of Raghav, who is busy concentrating his passion for journalism and activism, which is evident from her words below:

'I haven't met him since the offer. I called him, but he said I should do whatever I want. He is in some village this week for a story.'

'It's good for both of you if you stay here, I said.'

'Well, he didn't say that at all.'

I am sure he realises it.'

'I don't think he cares so much about my issues, unless I am involved in a corruption scandal', she said. (*Revolution*, 172).

Her emotional disgust makes their relationship bitter, and her internal conflict heightens when she starts meeting Gopal again and eventually sleeps with him. This makes her feel trapped between two realms, and she is unable to be true to both.

Her physical relationship with Gopal leaves her a trace of guilt and shame. She realizes this after their first intimate encounter and struggles between love and loyalty – “Do you want to know what I feel?” she said. ‘More than anything else,’ I said. ‘Guilt,’ she said” (*Revolution*, 224). Her inner conflicts become painful over a due course of time, and she becomes embarrassed on many occasions because of moral discomfort. Raghav is also not immune to jealousy. He becomes jealous upon understanding Aarti's close relationship with Gopal. He internalizes his sufferings, and he distracts himself by turning his attention towards his passion of journalism. This worsens the situation and distances him from Aarti. The irony is that while he struggles for the benefits of others, he is unable to retain his relationship with Aarti.

During the moments of emotional breakdown, Aarti also exhibits physiological responses which showcases her emotions. Her guilt and self-disgust are reflected through her silent crying after her physical intimacy with Gopal. The author describes that she has a blank facial expression indicating the emotional numbness that she is preoccupied with. Most of the times, her tears are not so explosive, but they are silent and internalised. There are also other signs which accompany her crying like difficulty speaking and the tightness in her muscle. These characters are also found to have a smiling and composed face in public, which they use as a mask to shadow their emotions. Thus, the author skilfully integrates the emotional responses and the physiological responses in the novel to effectively engage the readers.

Her emotional struggles embody the struggle of many women in the society. Her struggle between two men and the moral values showcases the intricacies in relationships, and this is evident when she feels guilt after her physical intimacy with Gopal. It reflects how women are emotionally burdened with moral values, and how they are anxious to escape the fear of judgement. Also, Gopal's redemption towards the end of the novel serves as a moment of moral awakening, where he realises ethics and moral values – “Only pain will come from being close to her. She belongs to Raghav, and there is no place for me in her life, I scolded myself” (*Revolution*, 154).

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