



Cinematic adaptation from Literature: A Study of Chetan Bhagat's Novels

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Abstract— The Present research paper aims at highlighting the cinematic representation of the works of Chetan Bhagat. The major emphasis is laid on the Chetan Bhagat writing which has been adapted into movies. Like this vibrant media and entertainment (M&E) industry provides attractive growth opportunities for global corporation. Bollywood, as the Hindi film industry is popularly known is the largest contributor to the Film industry and language cinema industries such as Bengali, Bhojpuri, Marathi and Gujarati. Although, this industry is the largest in the world in terms of the number of films it produces. It's not only Bollywood, even most of the successful Hollywood films are based on literary works. But film makers satisfy the hunger of a large heterogeneous audience with the element of Entertainment. The idea of screen adaptations is dates back years ago when people had limited options for entertainment and recreational activities. The study is based on movies made in Bollywood which have been inspired by the writings of novelists. This is a qualitative research in which Chetan Bhagat's novel *Five Point Someone, 2 States: The story of My Marriage, 3 Mistakes of my life, Half girlfriend and Revolution 2020* have been taken up by Bollywood film makers to make movies *3 Idiots, 2 States, Kai Po Che, Half Girlfriend and Revolution 2020* respectively. Chetan Bhagat, pioneers the way towards new era where he has been picked up by the Bollywood maker consistently. Whatever might be the reason, he is capable enough to shatters the all critics opinion on the ground of his success.

Keywords— Cinema, Mass and Media, Bollywood, Vibrant, Recreational.

I. INTRODUCTION

Chetan bhagat, presently, a leading and popular contemporary writer in Indian Fiction is one of the bestselling novelists today. Since his works refuse to easy categorization into canonical Indian English Novel, he is labelled as best-seller Novelist. In order to cater a huge audience, film makers from all over the world have adopted literature writings for movie making. The key purpose of these screen adaptations lies in giving visual appeal to the black and white words of the author's writings. Furthermore, there are restricted readers for different genres and subject of novel and literature respectively. Audiences are very important to grasp the content of media say as print, electronic and digital. Media these days is working and providing content keeping in view the target audience because it is the audience that makes the content popular to read and share. Cinema is the important medium to entertain and educate spectators by

providing them valuable information. Cinema falls under different genres like romance, action, thriller, comedy, off beat, cult, classic, animated etc. considerable length and a certain complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience. There may be two simple reasons why film makers choose novels or literature to make movies. First, Novels have in-built audience e.g. Chetan Bhagat's series which has been adapted by film makers to make a movie and showcase on big screen. The second reason is that the story is told which means the content is there; it just needs to be adapted but the process is not easy as it sounds. It has been observed that literature adaptation is not a new concept in Indian Cinema. Since the inception of Indian Cinema, film makers are taking references of literature and novels as the story line of their projects. In fact, the first ever full-length Indian silent feature film was an adaptation from a mythological character Raja Harishchandra. Since then, Indian filmmakers have directly or indirectly taken references from various

mythological and social stories in order to make their films (kaur 1).

Bhagat's first novel *Five Point someone* was published in 2004. The novel has been popular, taken up by masses and Bhagat became the famous overnight. This novel is dealing with the complexity and unheard challenges of the educational institutes in India. When the people read it, they can easily correlate it with their lives experience. Thus, Chetan Bhagat became a brand of novel writings. So Filmmaker saw him as an opportunity and sooner in 2009 Film adaptation of *Five Point Someone* converted into movie *3 Idiots* by Rajkumar Hirani. His second Novel *One Night @ Call Center* published in 2005, which is dealing with the contemporary issues like urbanization and metropolitan lives. This novel depicts the plundering situations of the people lives. Like, they have becomes modern in their outlook but still struggling in their traditional thoughts and mindset inwardly. This was also an interesting concept by Bhagat which was again adapted into movies by Atul Agnihotri named *Hello* in 2008. *Kai Po Che* is the third film based on Chetan Bhagat's novel *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008) directed by Abhishek Kapoor, and the movie was subsequently released in 2013. The phrase *Kai Po Che*, which translates to "I have cut", is a victory chant associated with kite-flying, a popular sport in Gujarat. The kite metaphor in the novel/movie refers to the three mistakes Govind makes along the way. Although, this novel has highlighted some national issues of 2002 Godhra riots in Gujrat and cricket obsession in India. Nevertheless, Bhagat has interwoven a thrilling love story in between all these issues. In the same series *2 States* is based on the novel by the same name published in the year 2009. This Indian romantic comedy film was directed by Abhishek Verman. This novel is a memoir based on the inter-caste marriage scenario in the Indian society. Film makers again find it interesting and made it into movie in 2014. Even though this topic was raised earlier by various novelist but the way Bhagat has instilled the commitment in love relationship and respects for their elders through his characters no one else has done. And the next one is *Half Girlfriend* (pub. In 2014), and was directed by the Mohit Suri released movie with the same name. His *Half Girlfriend* is again converted into movies in 2017. This novel has given the cultural shock to patriarchal society by giving the Live-in relationship a thought and acknowledgment. There are two more novels of Chetan Bhagat which are in the process of being made into movies: *Revolution2020* (pub. in 2011) which is being directed by Raj Kumar Gupta. It is interesting to mention here that Chetan Bhagat wrote a script for the popular Bollywood movie *Kick* released in the year 2015 (Web). This chronological trend of Bhagat writings has portrayed

him as a writer of the Bollywood. Even though many critics does not consider him as a literary writer but his ability to appealing masses and his best selling title shattering the all criticism.

One has rarely seen such an ongoing and prolonged relationship between a writer and films, especially in India. Curiously enough, it leads up to the question as to how his works have been frequently picked up by Bollywood film makers for making films? Whether his works are replete with contemporary issues which are attractive to Bollywood or whether the language used by him in his novels lends itself easily into writing screenplays/scripts for movies? To find out these answers let's have a look upon some of his interviews: The trend of movie making which is based on the novels has grown rapidly in present time. This is very true in the case of novels written by Chetan Bhagat. In the words of Boski Gupta, young readers love Chetan Bhagat, critics hate him but there is hardly anyone who doesn't know Chetan Bhagat. He touches the life of almost every Indian either through his books, newspaper columns, TV appearances, and social media or through his association with Bollywood. In one of his interviews with Taran he was asked why all his books could be made into movies? He replied: "I always had a plot driven, fast paced stories style that suits the Bollywood. However, I still write the stories I want to write, and even do a lot of non-fiction columns and motivational talks that have nothing to do with Bollywood." Unlike Hollywood, Hindi film industry lacks books-based movies. Bhagat argues that there is not enough content that is suited for films. Also, the English to Hindi transition is not so easy. Finally, it is a cultural thing where film makers have not looked to literature so much. On being asked in an interview whether Bhagat's novels are invariably adapted for cinema, and about his attitude to this transition? Bhagat replies: "I like to reach more Indians, and movies help me do so. The bigger the audience I have, the more likely they are to read my non-fiction columns on national issues or be interested in my views. Movies help me do that. I can't pick the least right" (Web). Thus, all his novels which have been made into movies are simple and influenced by day-to-day life of an average Indian. There is use of simple plot, language and there is every element of entertainment viz. love, friendship, sex, ambitions, betrayals and glamour in his writing. This must be attractive for Bollywood to make movies based on his novels. For example Krish, the protagonist in the novel *2 States* comments on the complexity in Indian marriages:

These stupid biases and discrimination are the reason our country is so screwed up. Its Tamil first, Indian later, Punjabi first Indian later, It has to end.

National anthem, National currency, and National team—still, we won't marry our children outside our state. How can this intolerance be good for our country? (102)

This shows protagonist rationality and his awareness about the social system which restricts them to do what they really want to. Such languages, conversations and issues are raised and highlighted by Bhagat which acts like a honey trap for the filmmaker. In another interview, Adrash Taran asks whether Chetan Bhagat is more careful with films now? To which Bhagat says: "It is literature coming to life. Bollywood is a medium to reach those people who cannot read and write. India has many such illiterate people. So, the audience that is left out gets the knowledge of my works through films." Chetan Bhagat is best known for his novel writing which has a kind of plot that is easily adaptable into movies. One sees that Chetan Bhagat as a writer has hit the right chord among Indian youth. Upon a closer reading of his novels one finds that they all have one thing in common: similar characters. His novels have a decent vocabulary and real life aspects of college-going crowd. Thus, a filmmaker finds it easy to adapt his work as a script for the films. For example, in contemporary times what kind of notion student have, here is a brief instance of conversation from the *Five Point Someone*, how Venkat believes in cramming and thinks the note-learning is the only way to excellence and also believes that there is no time for creativity and innovation. "Venkat you study all the time. Can't you just..." Alok said. I am nine-pointer, do you understand? I have to maintain my position!" Venkat said, speaking more to remind himself than to tell Alok" (92). This conversation throws light upon the contemporary scenario of the society/educational institutions. Students have mere becomes the processing machine to store everything, even though they are having true knowledge or not. Whether they know the knowledge which they perceive are useful for them in future or not. Everything has becomes blurry or confusing to them. So film maker find it suitable to raise such issues through their movies so they can put forth it differently and earn more money with the success of a movies. This is also evident in Bhagat's other interview with Ankush Arora. On being asked "Do you think your books stand the test of time?" Bhagat replies saying: I cannot predict that. People still know *Five Point Someone*, which came 10 years ago. People still read it. People still allude to it. It wasn't a quickie as people made it out to be that Chetan writes quickies. All the books have had some impact. Are they classics? No. But are they absolute read and throw variety? No. There are somewhere in the middle. That's where I want to be. I want to reach people and have a little bit of impact (Web). Likewise, P K.

Nayar in his *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* is of the view that:

Films of Satyajit Ray or Shayam Benegal are treated as 'intellectual' or 'artistic' even though the crowds do not go to watch them, while the films of David Dhawan, which draw bigger crowds are treated with disdain by film critics (this trend begin to change with popular culture studies in the 1970s). If the audience numbers is any indication then we can see that Dhawan's films appeal to more people, just as a street play attracted more spectators than the opera. However, this mass appeal is not the criterion used to classify films. (123)

And same is the case of Bhagat writings. He started the waves of Popular, Cult and Campus Novels in India. Somehow people find him close to their heart because he is portraying their lives with first hand experiences. Further, Ankush asked him: "which was the book that established you as India's bestselling author?" He said "Third book. *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* in 2008. That's when the New York Times wrote that (I am) the biggest selling author (in India)". Ankush further asked: "I felt that your new book reads like a quick Bollywood film script. Did you intentionally write in that way?" Bhagat replied "It's a love story. Love stories, you know, render themselves very well for movies. But I have written on Godhra riots or *what young India wants*. This was more cinematic, yes." Thus, Bhagat is explicit about his intention behind his writings. He wants to convey his message among the masses be it through entertainment industry like Bollywood or through the magazine or newspaper column.

II. PLOT VS. SCREENPLAY

As one can easily observe and understand the importance of plot in the novel writing likewise screenplay is equally important to the movies. In order to understand the difference between these two let's have a look upon the Mark Hugh explanation about Plot vs. Screenplay.

"What is the difference between story writing and screenplay writing for movies?" he distinguishes between Plot and Screenplay saying that artistry is required for screenwriting. However, screenwriting is the process of storytelling in the format of a screenplay. And what gets produced is filled with emotion, dialogue, life, story and narrative, but it is all meant to be embodied and represented by moving images and sounds. Screenplays are not like short stories or other literature. It is structurally different, it requires different approach of storytelling in a different manner, thus it involves a very different use of

words and language, it has its own self-contained terminology and references, and even it has its own community, historical norms, and conventions. Dialogue in a novel or short story is approached and used differently in screenplays. Action and settings are described and used differently in screenplays. Same has been mentioned by Basharat who brought Hamlet to Kashmir for Haider. He opines that storytelling may seem simple but transforming a book into screenplay takes a lot of effort, 'there's a difference between a literary and a cinematic image' he told Hindustan Times. He further says "A whole page of commentary in a book can be just a static shot in a film but for me, it was a learning curve." One witnessed a similar situation during the making of *Five Point Someone*. Bhagat wasn't entirely happy with the screenplay of the novel. Bhagat felt that around 70% of the film is based on his book, whereas the makers of the film said that only 2-5% of it is based on his book and that it was an original script after the changes. Bhagat felt that the film-maker had been unfair. In an interview to "Mint Lounge" on the eve of the film's release, Hirani had said: "For cinema, we had to introduce a distinct plot since the book was more a slice-of-life kind of narrative. I had told Chetan about the changes and he was fine with the changes. To this, Bhagat said: I don't care what Raju has said or what I have said before the release of the film. I saw the film only on the day of the premiere so what I said then was based on half the information" (Bhatlekar, Web). Likewise, R.K. Narayan also had a conflict with the movie *Guide* which was based on his novel. It was good but it didn't do justice to the original novel which was much better with each character having a shade of grey. Here in fact movie was made with the consent of the Narayan but after watching 'Guide,' R.K. Narayan was upset. In a hard hitting article in 'Life Magazine,' he criticized the film as it was different from the novel. He, however, complimented Dev Anand for performing the last scenes with finesse and Waheeda Rehman for making Rosy come alive on screen (Web).

Chetan Bhagat with his new genre of novel writing has become very popular in Bollywood. In India it's not only Bhagat who is chosen by film-makers but before him there have been many writers whose works have been made into films. His novels that have been made into movies have gained in popularity and have become doubly famous among the masses. The reason for the same is his writing skill with contemporary language, societal problem, educational barriers, love affairs and current conflict which are visible but no one wants to talk over them. The characters are indeed endowed with modern thinking. They think beyond the social norms of restriction and patriarchal hierarchy. Such writings and characters allure

filmmaker to adapt into cinematic form. Here is another instance of such a bold character in the *2 States*, Ananaya and Krish discuss openly their sex life. "This is my first time,' she said after we did it ... 'Was it your first time?' 'I'd rather not talk about it,' I said. 'Did you have girlfriend in IIT?' She set up to wear her top. I kept quit. Did you have sex with a guy?' Ananaya asked, eyebrows up" (26). This shows how easily and conveniently even a girl can express her feeling even without giving a second thought. This shows the urbanization and contemporary society which lead to easy adaption of such novels into movies without any changes and efforts. Another example is from *One night @call center* where Bhagat tries to show the situation of the globalized India through the portrayal of Military uncle. Here is an instance from the novel in the form of an e-mail which is sent by a son to his father (Military Uncle) conveying the horrible truth of life:

Dad... you have cultured my life enough, now stop cluttering my mailbox. I do not know what came over me that I allowed communication between you and my son. I don't want your shadow on him. Please stay away and do not send him any more emails. For literally or otherwise, we don't want your attachment. (165)

This piece of conversation arouses the emotional essence of a person and also throws the light upon the deteriorating relationships and insensitive humans being of modern times. However, such writings are more apt for the movie making. Such content are tempting to the Indian cinema which has been constantly providing by the Bhagat through his writing.

III. CONCLUSION

This paper will help to study the Film theory and to elaborate the cinematic adaptation of Bhagat's novels in details. Films and literature share a very close relationship and one witness this ongoing relationship since the time of Independence. Films and literature are indeed connected to each other. Sometimes people who watch a movie are willing to read the novel or vice-versa. Thus, Chetan Bhagat not only introduced the new genre of novel writing but he also laid the foundation of unique writing style, diction, themes and portrayal of bold characters etc. This uniqueness made him popular and well known writer for Bollywood. His writing style is so simple, lucid and contemporary that anyone can relate and visualize it. He also laid the foundation of Popular, Campus and Cult Fiction in the Indian writing of English. People can read his novels while they are travelling, sitting on the park and even during their monotonous time as a recreational thing. This has definitely help Bhagat to reach core of the

masses. Even though he has not considered being a literary writer and had criticized on the ground of language usage. But he dared to divert the main stream of literature to a different tangent which is not right for the literature lovers. Secondly, upcoming generation will never get to know about the exact parameters of literature and literariness. But he defended himself by saying language has its cultural association and meanings are contextual. Indeed he is successful to convey his inner thought, ideas, philosophy and most importantly the present circumstances of the nation.

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