

Contemporary Modern Fiction into Film Adaptation

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“Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new films, music, books, paintings, photographs, poems, dreams, random conversations, architecture, bridges, street signs, trees, clouds, bodies of water, light and shadows. Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul.” (Jarmusch)

For decades, filmmakers all over the world have got influenced from great literature and transcribed it into movies. An adaptation of books into cinema is nothing new for the Indian film industry too and the impact of literature on our films is almost as old as filmmaking itself. From Shakespeare to Ruskin Bond, Indian cinema has been inspired and adapted from many literary works. In fact, the first ever full-length silent feature film that India made was an adaptation from a mythological character Raja Harishchandra by Dadasaheb Phalke. It is about the King Harishchandra who goes on an expedition where he finds that sage Vishwamitra has trapped Trishakti and releases them to the sage's fury. The king Harishchandra, Queen Taramati and the prince go on an exile and give the kingdom to the sage to appease him. The son dies and Taramati is accused of his murder. Shiva appears as the mediator and the family is restated to the throne. Phalke's “Mohini Bhasmasur”, “Savitri Satyavan” (1914), “Lanka Dahan” (1917), “Shree Krishna Janma” (1918), “Kaliya Mardan” (1919), “Tukaram” (1921) and “Bhakta Prahlad” (1926); an Indo-German production are some other mythological films.

The later mythological, which are mostly B-movies, were mocked by many later social films such as Hrishikesh Mukherjee's 1975 film “Chupke Chupke”, V. Shantaram directed several mythological and devotionals at Prabhat before he made socials. Vijay Bhatt's film “Ram Rajya” (1943) was a Hindi-Marathi bilingual. It takes up the story of Ramayana after the return from Lanka. The narrative in Phalke's films allowed heroes and gods to come alive on the screen. He called his films 'Swadeshi' and his use of trick photography and special effects blossomed a new understanding around religion, which gathered him unparalleled popularity earning him the status of 'the father of Indian cinema'.

Apart from mythology, since the inception of cinema, literature has attracted all creative filmmakers. In India, pioneer like Pramathesh Barua and Debabi Basu have based their films on the works of writers such as Satyajit Ray's film “Pather Panchali”, which first brought Indian cinema international acclaim which was based on the great work of literature, by famed writer Bhibuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay. Eminent directors across the world are still making films based on the works of Shakespeare, Dickens and Hemingway. This proves beyond doubt, the irresistible charm literature holds for filmmakers.

A common form of film adaptation is the use of a novel as the basis of a feature film. Other works adapted into films include non-fiction, autobiography, comic books, scriptures, plays, historical sources and other films. From the earliest days of cinema, in 19th century Europe, adaptation from such diverse resources has been a universal practice of filmmaking. James M. Welsh and Peter Lev have given their impression that:

After a century of cinema, movies have changed substantially, both technologically and stylistically, but after a hundred years, mainstream cinema is still telling and retelling stories, and most of those stories are still being (or have been) appropriated from literary or dramatic sources, as much as 85 per-cent by some calculations and accounts. Adaptation has always been central to the process of filmmaking since almost the beginning and could well maintain its dominance into the cinema's second century. (Welsh and Lev xiii)

There are plenty of writers whose works have been made into many films such as William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, O' Henry, J.K. Rowling, and the sensation of youth's heart Chetan Bhagat.

Shakespeare Day is celebrated every April 23 to recognize the birth and death of English poet and playwright William Shakespeare. He wrote some of the world's most famous plays, including *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* etc., so it's no wonder Bollywood adapted his literary works for the big screen. *Hamlet* is a tale by Shakespeare that very succinctly captures ambition, love, jealousy and lust for power through familial relations, and quite a difficult plot to execute with all of its complexities. It is the 2014 Bollywood remake by Shakespeare-lover, Vishal Bharadwaj, titled "Haider", which captures the essence of the play while transforming its context to the troubled territory of Kashmir that has become a political background for the Indian and Pakistani state alike. The classic tragic love story of *Romeo and Juliet* has been inspirational for filmmakers, theatricians, artists, poets and performers across the world. The 2013 Sanjay Leela Bhansali direction, "Goliyo Ki Raseela Ram Leela" was one such adaptation, whose aesthetics were the only impressive bit. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, among his extremely popular works, explores relationships, marriage and love. A rather non-commercial and offbeat film, the 2010 release, "10 ml LOVE" was a Bollywood adaptation of this romantic comedy by Shakespeare. *Othello*, the dark tragedy by Shakespeare, continues to capture the imagination of many. *Othello* has inspired regional cinema in India, with films from Bengal, Kerala and other places. However, it was truly brought to the big Bollywood screen by Bharadwaj's "Omkaara", released in 2006. A tale that brings identity-based issues, such as caste and political stances. A tragedy by Shakespeare, *Macbeth* is another classic by the Bard that shows the dark side to ambition. A Bollywood exploration of the tragedy has been made by Bharadwaj absolutely in his 2003 Irrfan Khan and Tabu-starrer "Maqbool". Transforming the stage of the original to the Mumbai underworld, "Maqbool" is a brilliant take on the origin, with Lady Macbeth's character to watch out for.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Jane Austen adaptations never go out of style. She was an English novelist whose social commentary and masterly use of both free indirect speech and irony eventually made her one of the most influential and honoured novelists in English literature. In popular culture, Austen's novels and personal life have been adapted into book illustrations, dramatizations, Bollywood films, television, and professional theatre. Austen's books often feature match-making parents, which gives her stories a particular resonance in India, where the majority of marriages are still arranged today. Austen's stories which feature "love marriages" as the heroine marries a man with whom she falls in love with, and gains the approval of her parents in the process, are very popular with women from middle-class Indian families.

In India, *Sense and Sensibility* has turned into the 2000 Tamil language film "Kandukondain Kandukondain" directed by Rajiv Menon and the 2014 Hindi language soap opera *Kumkum Bhagya* directed by Ekta Kapoor. Another movie, "Aisha" was Sonam Kapoor's romantic comedy set in plush south Delhi was an adaptation of Jane Austen's 1815 novel *Emma*. Directed by Rajshree Ojha, the film that revolves around a girl who believes she's perfect at match-making earned about 18 crore at the box office. *Pride and Prejudice* adapted as a film in 2004 named "Bride and Prejudice". The three Bollywood adaptations of Austen provide creative interpretations of Austen's novels. They demonstrate how audiences in different times and countries can still relate to Austen's works.

William Sydney Porter was an American short-story writer. He is better known by his pen name O. Henry. His stories touch an array of themes, such as love, sacrifice, deception, and coincidence. In addition, his stories typically have a surprise ending. His oeuvre is, thus, best suited to be made into films, and in fact, there have been quite a few Hindi films that have been inspired by his work.

One of the earliest adaptations of O. Henry's works in Hindi cinema was "Bombai Ka Babu" (1960). Directed by Raj Khosla, the film was inspired by Henry's story *A Double-Dyed Deceiver*. K. Shankar's "Sachai" (1969) is based on Henry's another famous story *After Twenty Years*. The film starred Shammi Kapoor and Sanjeev Kumar in lead roles. Rituparno Ghosh's first Hindi film "Raincoat" (2004) was also inspired by Henry's story *The Gift of the Magi*. Most recently, Vikramaditya Motwane made the poetic "Lootera" (2013). Set in 1953, it is the story of Pakhi (Sonakshi Sinha) and Varun (Ranveer Singh). Pakhi is the daughter of a rich zamindar of Manikpur and Varun is an archaeologist. The second half of "Lootera" involving the leaf sequences is based on Henry's *The Last Leaf*.

Joanne Rowling better known by her pen name J.K. Rowling, is a British author, screenwriter, producer, and philanthropist. She is best known for writing the Harry Potter fantasy series, which has won multiple awards and sold more than 500 million copies, becoming the best-selling book series in history. The books are the basis of a popular film series, over which Rowling had overall approval on the scripts and was a producer on the final films. In

October 1998, Warner Bros. purchased the film rights to the first two novels for a seven-figure sum. A film adaptation of “Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone” was released on 16 November 2001, and “Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets” on 15 November 2002. Both films were directed by Chris Columbus. The film version of “Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban” was released on 4 June 2004, directed by Alfonso Cuarón. The fourth film, “Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire”, was directed by Mike Newell, and released on 18 November 2005. The film of “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix” was released on 11 July 2007. David Yates directed, and Michael Goldenberg wrote the screenplay, having taken over the position from Steve Kloves. “Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince” was released on 15 July 2009. David Yates directed again, and Kloves returned to write the script. Warner Bros. filmed the final instalment of the series, “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows”, in two segments, with part one being released on 19 November 2010 and part two being released on 15 July 2011. Thus, all the parts of Harry Potter has gained tremendous success in all over the world and the most favourite children’s series.

Chetan Prakash Bhagat is an Indian author and columnist. He has written eight novels and three non-fiction books. His first novel, *Five Point Someone*, was published in 2004. His novels have been listed as bestsellers. “3 Idiots” based on *Five Point Someone* is a 2009 Indian Hindi-language coming-of-age comedy-drama film co-written with Abhijat Joshi and directed by Rajkumar Hirani. “3 idiots” The next adaptation “Kai Po Che!” is a 2013 Indian Hindi-language buddy drama film directed by Abhishek Kapoor and produced by Ronnie Screwvala and Siddharth Roy Kapur, based on Chetan Bhagat's 2008 novel *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*. The film title “Kai Po Che!” is originally a Gujarati phrase that means "I have cut" which refers to Makar Sankranti. “Kai Po Che!” “2 States” is a 2014 Indian Hindi-language romantic-comedy drama film written and directed by Abhishek Varman, marking his directorial debut. An adaptation of Chetan Bhagat's 2009 novel with the same name, it is produced by Karan Johar and Sajid Nadiadwala. The film stars Arjun Kapoor and Alia Bhatt, with Amrita Singh, Ronit Roy, Revathi and Shiv Kumar Subramaniam portraying supporting roles. It was released worldwide on 18 April 2014, receiving positive reviews. “Half Girlfriend” is an Indian Hindi-language romantic drama film based on the novel of the same name written by Chetan Bhagat. The film is directed by Mohit Suri and stars Arjun Kapoor, Shraddha Kapoor and Rhea Chakraborty. (Half Girlfriend) Apart from this, Bhagat is often invited to speak at various institutes and organisations in India and abroad. In an article of The Hollywood Reporter Nyay Bhushan writes:

India has seen its fair share of films that have drawn in literary classics in the past, even though the practice may not be as sustained and organized as it is in Hollywood and other film industries. One of the notable examples is Bengali author Sarat Chandra Chatterjee’s iconic romance tale *Devdas*, which has seen over two dozen cinematic versions over the years.

Thus, in a nutshell, Bollywood is rife with literary films. Novels by Indian authors have been successfully transformed into various movies such as Devdas (2002), Parineeta (2005) etc. However, there is also an array of widely appreciated Bollywood movies that were inspired by the work of international authors too.

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