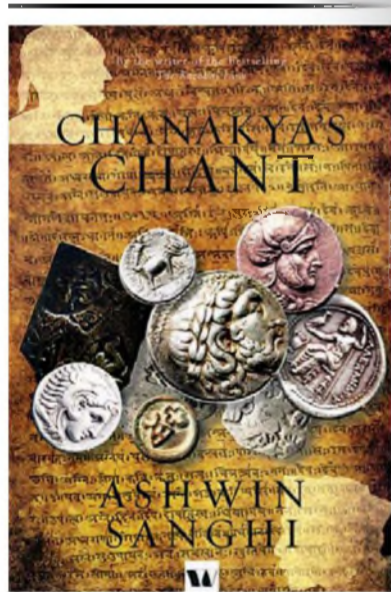




Going by the book

Literature has been a source of inspiration for films since ages, but what is novel is the adaptation of contemporary English works written by Indian authors



Chaya Unnikrishnan

KARAN Johar is making a film based on Amish Tripathi's best selling novel, *Immortals of Meluha*, with names like Vidya Balan and Kareena Kapoor being tossed around for the heroine's role. Sajid Nadiadwala is adapting Chetan Bhagat's *2 States* on the big screen with Arjun Kapoor in the lead role. Vishal Bhardwaj, who has done maximum literary adaptations including *Maqbool* (Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *Omkara* (*Othello*) and *Blue Umbrella* (Ruskin Bond's book by the same name) is now filming *Ek Thi Daayan*, which is transformed from a short story written by Mukul Sharma. Abhishek Kapoor is currently shooting the cinematic version of Bhagat's book, *Three Mistakes Of My Life*.

While this is not a novel concept — *Devdas*, *Guide*, *Parineeta*, et al, were adapted from books — what's new is that filmmakers are opting for contemporary English works by Indian authors. Says Siddharth Roy Kapoor, MD — Studios, Disney, UTV, which is making Bhagat's *Three mistakes*, *Revolutions 2020* and Ashwin Sanghi's *Chanakya's Chant*, "Indian English writers are writing stories that are rooted and accessible. 10 to 15 years ago, the writing was elitist and not pan-India but since the past five-seven years, it has become mass-oriented. Since movie is a mass medium, these books easily lend themselves for adaptations."

Agrees Tripathi, who had even appointed an agency to sell the films rights for his first book. "Back in the '40s and '50s many

films were adapted from Sarat Chandra and Munshi Premchand's novels but the trend died in the '70s, '80s and '90s. At that time, the writing was designed towards the western audience. But now it is more Indian, whether it's based on mythology, history or today's youth. Also, the film industry, which has always been rooted, is looking for good stories and as a result the book and the cinema world are coming together."

No wonder films are increasingly being adapted from books as they provide the right fodder to filmmakers sourcing for new ideas. Bhagat made the breakthrough for a new era of filmi adaptations when his best-seller *Five Point Someone* inspired *3 Idiots*.

As trade analyst Taran Adarsh says, "Filmmakers want to try every route. First Western movies were being adapted, later regional remakes were in vogue. But literature will never go out of fashion and India has great stories to be told."

However, cinematic versions of best sellers do not guarantee success. There have been several instances of films bombing at the box-office though the books on which they were based were huge hits. For every *Slumdog Millionaire* (based on Vikas Swarup's *Q & A*), there is a *Saat Khoon Maaf*, (adapted from Ruskin Bond's *Seven Husbands*) and for every *3 Idiots* there is a *Hello* (based on *One Night @ Call Center*). Obviously, the written word still holds more power even if a film goes completely by the 'book'. Or not.

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