

English Literary Texts Adapted By Bollywood

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Abstract

Filmmakers all over the world have got influenced from great literature and transcribed it into movies. 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**”. Since then, Indian filmmakers have directly or indirectly taken references from various mythological and social stories in order to make their films. The recent one being [Prakash Jha](#)’s **Rajneeti**, which is regarded as a modern day “**Mahabharata**”

Paper

Many films have had been made by assimilating immense inspiration from literary masterpieces. For example, India’s bestselling author **Chetan Bhagat** already has three books to his credits that have been successfully transcribed into films. His first motion picture adaptation was the [Salman](#)

[Khan](#) starrer *Hello*, which was based on his second novel called “*One Night at the Call Center*”. And then came *Three Idiots*, a 200-crore blockbuster that was loosely inspired from Chetan’s first fiction “*Five point someone*”. However, the filmmakers refused to give him credit leading to a big controversy between them. More recently, Chetan’s third book “*Three*

mistakes of my life” became fodder for Abhishek’s Kapoor directorial venture *Kai Po Che* that also went on to become a huge grosser.

Among several winning adaptations of literature into cinema, the first name that comes to mind is the Oscar winning *Slumdog Millionaire* based on Vikas Swarup’s fiction work “*Q and A*”. Though the writer of the film changed the story to a huge extent yet the whole concept of the film was adapted. Another Academy winner that was a faithful adaptation of a book by the same name was *Life of Pi*. Even independent filmmakers like Mira Nair also experimented this formula of book adaptations and got critically acclaimed for their work.

She won accolades for adapting an American Indian author **Jhumpa Lahiri’s** first novel, “*The Namesake*” into a feature film. The film revolved around a Bengali couple played by Tabu and [Irfan Khan](#) who struggle to come to terms with the American way of life.

Tripping back to the commercial cinema, Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s *Saawariya* seems worthy of mentioning as it was a visual experience entirely based on a short Russian story “*White Nights*”. Another immortal story turned into a movie includes *Parineeta* that was a Bengali novella written by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and

transformed into a musical Hindi film by Pradeep Sarkar.

Adapting a novel into a two-hour movie is a big challenge in itself as sometimes, accommodating the story to fit in the time length messes up the whole essence of the original art. Consequently, there have been so many movie adaptations that haven't worked well on the box-office despite being inspired from some famous works of literature.

What is literature in the modern world, and more particularly, how has the novel been affected by the cinema? This presentation will attempt to measure the impact of literature on media arts. When man comes home after day's work, he

needs some sort of entertainment and relaxation. Cinema has proved a wonderful and forceful means of entertainment and amusement. A young man of today can go without food but not without a film. The cinema is the cheapest and the most popular form of amusement. Labourers can afford to miss their evening meal, not their evening show. Students prefer films to reading books. Thus, cinema exercises a very powerful effect on society.

While going through the literature review of the particular topic it shows that literature is the base of any cinema. Before producing any movie there is a script, and script is nothing but the literature, which help to make

the cinema. Through literature, it reveals that Cinema, on the whole, is a powerful means of recreation as well as of education. It is not itself bad. The film producers should select good stories classical mythology, historical subjects and Indian literary master-pieces. Documentary films on scientific, historical and literary subjects should be shown to students. The producers are misusing cinema for making huge profits.

As popular Hindi cinema reinvents itself under a global gaze, a stigma of illegitimacy persists. This stigma derives from popular Hindi cinema's long history of unacknowledged adaptation of various source texts, which is usually censured and

dismissed, with little or no analysis, by critics. *The Encyclopedia of Hindi Cinema* models this paradox: “A large majority of Hindi films ape Hollywood in a manner singularly devoid of any kind of inspiration.... Interestingly, none of these films is a carbon copy of the original.” *Bollywood Retakes* resists the typical discourse that assumes popular Hindi cinema's proclivity for adaptation reveals a creative lack based on financial concerns. Instead, this dissertation argues that the interwoven textual, thematic and copyright relationships of adaptations dramatize new anxieties about Indian cinema's origins and legitimacy under the global gaze—anxieties stemming

from concerns about cultural contamination and the blurred line of deference or defiance vis-à-vis multinational interests.

Beginning with a Hindi adaptation of Shakespeare, a touchstone for cinematic adaptation studies and Indian cinema, the dissertation argues that *Maqbool* (2003), an acknowledged adaptation of *Macbeth*, incorporates a pregnant Lady Macbeth who embodies the anxiety of influence. The pregnancy, itself borrowed from Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957), dramatizes the core tragedy of the childless couple while announcing a new generation of Indian cinema with its attendant concerns of biological,

directorial, and international legitimacy. Whereas *Maqbool* advertises its source text, the most misconstrued adaptation in Indian cinema is the unacknowledged Hollywood to Bollywood adaptation, often considered cannibalistic. To address the ideological structure of the Hollywood template in the new Bollywood film, the dissertation provides case studies of two popular Hindi films, *Shakti: The Power* (2002), an adaptation of *Not Without My Daughter* (1991), and *Phir Milenge* (2004), an adaptation of *Philadelphia* (1993); together these films demonstrate how new claims about contemporary Indian citizenship are announced through the genre of

the unacknowledged adaptation. Reversing the Hollywood-to-Bollywood discourse, the controversial *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), an adaptation of several Indian inter-texts, illustrates the stakes of adaptation for Indian cinema: the right of self-representation and international recognition.

A very different Shakespearean influence was seen in the late Rituparno Ghosh's *The Last Lear*. Although technically not a Bollywood production, the English language film co-starring Preity Zinta and Arjun Rampal garnered ample attention casting Amitabh Bachchan as a retired stage actor who specialised in playing Shakespearean roles.

Rather than settle for a straight adaptation of a Shakespearean text, Ghosh used his trademark sensitivity as a filmmaker to dissect the complexities of *Lear* by equating his situation with that of the film's modern-day tragic hero.

These, though, are films that bear perceptible traces of Shakespeare. The truth is along with the epics *Mahabharat* and *Ramayan*, Shakespeare's plays are perhaps the commonest storehouse of inspirations for Bollywood.

After a drought which lasted nearly sixty years, a **Jane Austen** resurgence has brought the 18-19th century author back to life. For *Pride and Prejudice*, after the 1940 elaborately-costumed

Lawrence Olivier version from MGM, audiences had to wait until 1995 for the release of the British miniseries iconically associated with Colin Firth emerging shirtless from a lake. It wasn't until 2003 that *Pride and Prejudice* finally returned to the big screen in the form of a "Latter-Day" adaptation, which presumably made much of the novel's chastity for its Mormon audiences. *Becoming Jane* (2007) fused the *Pride and Prejudice* narrative with the figure of Jane Austen, blending fiction, history and authorship, while 2013 will see Elizabeth Bennet fighting not only her pride and prejudices but also zombie foes ("Pride and Prejudice"). But before adaptation gets stretched quite

so far, let us consider Joe Wright's 2005 realistic, modernized-heritage rendition of *Pride and Prejudice* and Gurinder Chadha's 2004 Bollywood/Hollywood hybrid *Bride and Prejudice*, which relocates the story to modern day India. After a drought which lasted nearly sixty years, a Jane Austen resurgence has brought the 18-19th century author back to life. For *Pride and Prejudice*, after the 1940 elaborately-costumed Lawrence Olivier version from MGM, audiences had to wait until 1995 for the release of the British miniseries iconically associated with Colin Firth emerging shirtless from a lake. It wasn't until 2003 that *Pride and Prejudice* finally returned to the big screen in the form

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Such attitude seems to be possible only when we are able to develop a distanced relationship with a literary text. Things look different in the case of adaptations that are based on the books we love and have interiorized so intimately that they have become an integral part of our imagination. Our favourite books possess the ability to plunge us into a magic realm, into an atmosphere that embraces all our senses. By watching an adaptation we want to prolong this magic, but the strong wish to revisit the beloved world of the book through film produces a feeling of hopeful expectation mixed with anxiety because the film is going to interfere with a world that is treasured and

cherished in our hearts. An adaptation which does not respond to our personal vision of the book is immediately seen as an attack on our integrity. In spite of the fact that in the case of best-sellers the audience will inevitably declare against all the details of the films that betray the cherished original, adaptations have not lost their appeal for the film industry. Filmmakers know perfectly well that their films are going to be scrutinized for any signs of unfaithfulness to the source. Nevertheless, they expose themselves freely to severe and unfavourable judgments and bring the audience's favourites onto screen. Observing these "masochistic" tendencies in her

Theory of Adaptation, Linda Hutcheon wants to find out "why anyone would agree to adapt a work, knowing their efforts would likely be scorned as secondary and inferior to the adapted text or to the audience's own imagined versions", in other words: "What motivates adapters, knowing that their efforts will be compared to competing imagined versions in people's heads and inevitably be found wanting?" On the other hand she tries to explain what persuades the readers into going to the cinema or buying a DVD and watching an adaptation although they do not want to see their favourite book changed.

CONCLUSION

Only a list on Indian films based on literary works from writers from all around the world or on the lives and writings of Indian authors. I have only included the films that I've watched and liked as well as a few that I'd love to watch., Indian films were earning overseas as much as they were from the domestic market—an indication that the reach of Indian cinema was gradually becoming global. Apart from discussing the gradually changing market of Bollywood films.

I feel honour to see films which have been adopted from great novels .

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