

From Textual Image to Image Text: ChetanBhagat's *Five Point Someone*

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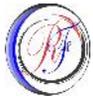
Film adaptation is the transfer of a written work or works in whole or part to a feature film. It is a type of work. A common form of film adaptation is the use of a novel as the basis of a feature film, but film adaptation includes the use of non-fiction including journalism, autobiography, comic book, scripture, plays, historical sources, and even other films. From the earliest days of cinema, in nineteenth century Europe, adaptation from such diverse resources has been a ubiquitous practice of film-making.

Novels are frequently adapted for films. For the most part, these adaptations attempt either to appeal to an existing commercial audience or to tap into the innovation and novelty of a less well known author. Inevitably, the question of "faithfulness" arises, and the more high profile the source novel, the more insistent is the questions of fidelity.

With Raj Kumar Hirani's *3 Idiots*, an adaptation of ChetanBhagat's *Five Point Someone* hitting the screens, Indian film industry has opened its arms to stories by new-gen Indian authors. If one takes a walk down memory lane with the films that owe their success to the bestsellers they've been based on. Some famous Hindi movies based on Books are- *Guide*, *Maqbool*, *Angoor*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, *3 Idiots*, *Parineeta*, *The Namesake*, etc. Taking a trip back in time Bollywood begins with some famous stories that were adapted into films. In fact the very first film ever made in India was a silent film called *Raja Harishchandra* in 1913! Needless to say that this first full-length Indian feature film was adapted from the legend of *Raja Harishchandra* recounted in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

From historical legends to works of fiction our film makers moved fast in search of better stories and if I had to name one Indian author who's had most of his stories adapted into films, I'd have to say Bengali novelist Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. He's had over 5 of his stories made into films of which *Parineeta* and *Devdas* have had numerous adaptations. When we talk about films based on books *Devdas* is one of the first that comes to mind. Did you know this film has had around ten adaptations! Five in Hindi, three in Bengali, one in Tamil and Telugu and one in Assamese! Its latest adaptation was *Anurag Basu's Dev D* which took the story of *Devdas* on a whole new level... a creatively original adaptation. *Parineeta* on the other hand has had around five adaptations of which we were aware of the 2005 *Pradeep Sarkar's Parineeta* starring Sanjay Dutt, Vidya Balan and Saif Ali Khan.

Talking about multiple adaptations, it's not only legendary Indian authors that inspire us, but also the father of English literature himself, William Shakespeare whose infamous plays have been generously adapted over the years in Bollywood. *A Comedy of Errors*, one of Shakespeare's earlier plays written way back in 1592-94 was adapted into two Hindi films and one Kannada film (called *Uta Palta*). Starting with the Kishore Kumar starrer *Do Duni Chaar* in 1968 and then there was *Angoor* in 1982 starring Sanjeev Kumar and Deven Verma. Although these films were successful but no one publicized their



Shakespearean adaptations till Vishal Bharadwaj came along. In 2004 Vishal Bharadwaj gave us *Maqbool* which was Shakespeare's *Macbeth* with a *desiversion*. Restructuring the story around the underworld and its many deceits, One Shakespearean adaptation wasn't enough for Mr. Bharadwaj and two years later in 2006 he adapted the story of *Othello* in *Omkara*.

After *Maqbool and Omkara*, Bharadwaj became known for his unique adaptations and though this year's super hit *Kaminey* was an original but 2007's *The Blue Umbrella* was another adaptation by Vishal Bharadwaj which was based on a short story of the same name by Ruskin Bond. Other remarkable adaptations are Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (2003), R K Narayanan's *Guide*, Munshi Premchand's *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* (1977) from story of the same name. Dharmatma is inspired by Mario Puzzo's criminal saga *The Godfather*.

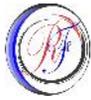
Coming back to Indian writers recently we've seen a lot of famous films that have been penned by Indians and these have not always been Hindi films. The Oscar winning *Slumdog Millionaire* is based on Vikas Swarup's *Q and A*. Simon Beaufoy has changed the story to a huge extent to make *Slumdog Millionaire*'s Oscar winning screenplay but the whole concept of the film was taken from *Q and A*. Another American Indian author Jhumpa Lahiri had her first novel, *The Namesake* adapted into a Hollywood film of the same name. Directed by Mira Nair, *The Namesake* starred a mix of Bollywood and Hollywood actors Irrfan Khan, Tabu and Kal Penn. Similarly Anita Desai's *In Custody* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* are also good adaptations.

Chetan Bhagat is a former banker turned author, who is credited with having helped extend the reach of literature to a broader audience in India. Seven years ago an Indian investment banker penned a story of three friends at the Indian Institute of Technology, one of the country's top schools. Soon after, the book became a best seller, hugely popular among India's college crowd. Same thing happened a year later, when he published his second novel, this time on the life of call center employees. He is the author of five bestselling novels namely *Five Point Someone*, *One Night @ the Call Centre*, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*, (2008), *Revolution 2020 and Two States*. In 2008, *One Night @ the Call Centre* was adapted into a Hindi film called *Hello*. It became the first adaptation of his novel. Though it was hugely unsuccessful at the box office, Chetan's second adapted story *Five Point Someone* has created huge waves already.

With Rajkumar Hirani as the director, Vidhu Vinod Chopra as the producer and a big actors like Aamir Khan, Kareena Kapoor, Madhavan and Sharman Joshi, *3 Idiots* seems all set to get the audiences rocking. *Five Point Someone* was Chetan Bhagat's first novel and it went on to become an international bestseller. The book even starts with a disclaimer:

This is not a book to teach you how to get into IIT or even how to live in college. In fact, it describes how screwed up things can get if you don't think straight.

Five Point Someone is a story about three friends in IIT who are unable to cope. Three hostel mates – Alok, Hari and Ryan get off to a bad start in IIT – they screw up the first class quiz. And while they try to make amends, things only get worse. It takes them a while to realize: If you try and screw with the IIT system, it comes back to double screw you. Before they know it, they are at the lowest echelons of IIT society. They have a five-point-something GPA out of ten, ranking near the end of their class. This GPA is a tattoo that will



remain with them, and come in the way of anything else that matters – their friendship, their future, their love life. While the world expects IITians to conquer the world, these guys are struggling to survive. Will they make it? Do under performers have a right to live? Can they show that they are not just a five-point-somebody but a five-point-someone?

The novel is set in the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, in the period 1991 to 1995. It is about the adventures of three mechanical engineering students (and friends), Hari Kumar (the narrator), Ryan Oberoi, and Alok Gupta, who fail to cope with the grading system of the IITs. Ryan is a bit smart and outspoken, whereas Alok and Hari are mildly cry babies. The three hostelmates get off to a bad start in IIT – they screw up the first class quiz. And while they try to make amends, things only get worse. It takes them a while to realize: If you try and screw with the IIT system, it comes back to double screw you. Before they know it, they are at the lowest echelons of IIT society. They have a five-point-something GPA out of ten, ranking near the bottom of their classes.

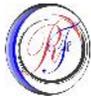
This book was made into two films, *3 Idiots* in Hindi and *Nanban* in Tamil. The names of the characters and their attributes were changed. Also, both the films were not full adaptations of the books, as many of the scenes from the book, including the climax, were changed in the films.

Hari Kumar (FarhanQureshi)played by Madhavanis the narrator of the story, a young college going student who loves wildlife photography, but is being forced by his parents to become an engineer. Hari's background (as acknowledged in one chapter of the book) was not elaborated upon. However, Hari seemed to be auto-biographical and the "Krish" character in ChetanBhagat's *2 States* would provide greater details about Hari's background.

Ryan Oberoi(RanchoddasShamaldasChanchad (Rancho) aka PhunsukhWangdu ,played by Aamir Khan ,is a young, energetic and supposedly wealthy college going student who is passionate about engineering. Though Rancho wants to be an engineer, he leans more towards inventing rather than seeking for a job in an MNC unlike his other college-mates. According to him, one's profession should be something he or she loves doing, irrespective of how much it pays. He also keeps stating throughout the film that one should run after excellence, not after success. Rancho also believes in the concept of "All Is Well", in which people should focus on the present and live it as it is, instead of worrying over the future. There are many significant differences between the Ryan and Rancho characters, both in their background and attitudes.

Alok Gupta (RajuRastogi),played by Sharman Joshiis a young and insecure college going student who isn't confident enough to deal with problems in life all by himself and always relies on God. Raju's only mission in life is to pull his family out of poverty, improve their economic status and get his elder sister married. This character is very similar to the one in the book.

Prof.Cherian (Virusahastrabuddhe) ,played by BomanIraniiis a hugely competitive, efficient, strict and disciplined man who has been running the Imperial College of Engineering (Ideal Engineering College in Tamil) for the last three decades. He believes that life is a race, the ones who are not efficient about work and time get crushed. He sneers at Rancho's concept of studying for knowledge rather than marks and constantly spars with him and his friends due to this. He is known as "Virus" among the students. Viru has a greater



role at the college when compared to Prof. Cherian. His daughter, NehaCherian(PiaSahastrabuddhe) ,played by KareenaKapoor,young, beautiful, eccentric doctor, daughter of ViruSahastrabuddhe and Rancho's love interest. This character is a complete departure from the book, because in the book, she was Hari's girlfriend. Also while Pia and Rancho finally end up together, Neha and Hari leave each other due to Hari's job. Finally, A competitive and studious South Indian college student Venkat ,(ChaturRamalingam) ,played by Omi Vaidyawho believes rote learning is the only way to excellence and also believes that there is no time for creativity and innovation in the turbulent and competitive race of life. Venkat has a small role in the book, while Chatur is one of the major characters in the movie.

A controversy developed a few days after the release, however, over the fact that Chetan's credit, "Based on the novel *Five Point Someone* by ChetanBhagat" appeared in the closing credits rather than in the opening ones. At that time, Bhagat stated that he was expecting an opening credit and he was quite surprised on not seeing it. It's not about it being there, it's about the placement and the prominence.

A little eccentric IITians may be, but they are considered to be one of the most elite groups in the world. If you are an IITian, you will probably relate very well to this light-hearted narrative about the life of three average guys at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi .If you are an IITian you would also know what "average" in IIT means. If you are not an IITian, you will still enjoy this book. *Five Point Someone: What Not to Do at IIT* may be about life in IIT, but the characters are interestingas well as very un-IIT like. According to the author, ChetanBhagat, this book is not about how to get into IIT or what to do once you are in, but what not to do there.

The book is narrated in the first person by Hari, with some small passages by his friends Ryan and Alok, as well as a letter by Hari's girlfriend NehaCherian. Most of the book deals with the numerous attempts by the trio to cope with and/or beat the system as well as Hari's fling with Neha. Their most important attempt was "C2D" (Cooperate to Dominate).While the tone of the novel is humorous, it takes some dark turns every now and then, especially when it comes to the families of the protagonists. Most of the action, however, takes place inside the campus as the boys, led by the ever creative Ryan, frequently lamenting how the internationally lauded IIT system has stifled their creativity by forcing them to value grades more than anything else. Uninspiring teaching and numerous assignments add to their woes, though the boys do find a sympathizer in Prof. Veera, the new fluid mechanics professor.

In short, the autobiographical account lends itself to fine character development. The book is fast paced and has very funny conversational style plus lingo typical to those who come from the institution.

Work Cited

Bhagat,Chetan.*Five Point Someone*. Rupa&Company ,Delhi. 2004.