

From *Five Point Someone* to *3 Idiots*: Politics behind Adaptation

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Abstract: 3 Idiots has been a very popular film from the famous Indian film industry, Bollywood. The film was adapted from a popular novel Five Point Someone written by Chetan Bhagat. Though the film was adapted from an already 'popular' novel, still significant changes were brought in the adaptation process. This paper wants to put light on this process of adaptation or "Bollywoodization", and will try to explain the changes. The paper will try to show that in the adaptation process not only Bollywood's noted 'tradition versus modernity' conflict plays a vital role, but also, influence of classical Indian epics along with India's past and its present socio-economic challenges play vital roles to decide the final shape of the film. Thus the paper wants to prove that though a film like 3 Idiots apparently speaks about some anti-establishment ideology of breaking away from stereotyped thinking regarding the education system of India; it also covertly surrenders and re-imposes many other dominant ideologies which try to reassure stereotyped thinking in other fields of everyday life. The adaptation process for a Bollywood film, or to put it in a more elaborate framework, the making of a 'popular' Bollywood film is a very complex process where different long established and new ideological stands intermingle to create a final product which finally tries to serve 'everything to everyone'.

Keywords: Bollywood films, ideology, adaptation

Introduction

Adaptation theory has been going through debates regarding the issue of fidelity since its inception. Along with it, many consider the 'literary' texts, by virtue of its medium, as 'superior' to their film versions, and start their adaptation studies from that point. Here adaptation is judged based on its closeness to the source text, and any breach from the source is critiqued severely. But a good number of scholars and theorists of adaptation studies have broken themselves free from such prejudiced bias for literature and considered adaptation as a separate creative field. Film critics like Andre Bazin allotted much liberty to the film adaptation process. Bazin (1948/2000)

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saw successful adaptation as adaptation of the soul of the source text. The difference and changes in 'forms' was not a key issue for him as long as both of the texts, the literary and the film, share the same spirit. He says, "Faithfulness to a form, literary or otherwise is illusory: what matters is the equivalence in meaning of the forms." (Bazin, 2000, p.20). But with the progress of time, more liberty was taken in case of film adaptation. To understand the complexity of present day adaptation, Dudley Andrew (1984) hermeneutically divides all film adaptations in three categories: Borrowing, Intersection, and Transformation; where he shows that issues of fidelity, criticism and transformation work at various degrees in every adaptation (Andrew, 1984, p.29). This paper also agrees with such conception of adaptation where it shows that in the adaptation process of the film *3 Idiots* a lot of things were taken from the source text, whereas a lot were not, and at the same time a good number of new things were added. But this paper is concerned more about the 'why' related issues in such an adaptation. That is, 'why' different changes were brought during the adaption process, and 'what' interest or ideology they finally serve. The concept finds its philosophical resonance when Anubha Mukherji aptly says:

Film adaptation studies should be able to identify how a film text amplifies, ignores, subverts, transforms or extends the meaning of a source text. The source text gets influenced by the prevalent ideological discourses of the day in its transformation towards a film text. The film adaptation of a novel is also largely dependent on the political constraints, auteurist redilections, charismatic stars and the new technology.

(Mukherji, 2001, p.152)

The case of *3 Idiots* becomes more interesting as it is adapted, not from any classic literary text, rather from an already popular novel *Five Point Someone*. The existing popularity of the novel testifies its compliance with the taste of its readers. Still, the film, being a mainstream, commercial one, to ensure better success and to comply more with the taste of its bigger audience, accepts, rejects, and adds contents with that of the novel. It also brings significant changes in its forms. This paper aims at a deeper understanding of these changes.

Adaptation and Implications

The novel *Five Point Someone* describes the story of three college friends: Ryan, Hari and Alok. They are the students of one of the most prestigious educational institutes in India, the IIT Delhi. To keep their grades up to the

mark, every student in the IIT has to 'mug' a lot. But at one stage, these three friends decide to be strategic and not to study more than 3 hours a day, and enjoy their university life to the fullest. As a consequence of this decision, they enjoy their lives a lot, but at the end of the day they fall in some great troubles. The novel is a first person narration of Hari who also falls in a love relationship with his professor's daughter Neha.

In the adaptation process some significant changes were made with the role of the central characters. Ryan who was the decision maker in the trio was renamed as Rancho. Starred by famous actor Aamir Khan, Rancho becomes all important and extremely powerful character in the film. Not only importance of the character was increased, new stories regarding Rancho's past and present was added. Not only that, Neha who is shown as a girlfriend of Hari in the novel, was adopted as the character Piya, and she became a girlfriend of Rancho (Ryan). The character Hari also went through massive changes. He became Farhan, a Muslim, and instead of Neha, photography was shown as his love and passion. Also many other characters were added in the story and many other accompanying incidents were created.

To ensure convenience in reading, the remaining part of the essay has been divided in four sub-sections based on sex and gender stereotyping, socio-religious issues, influence of the epic, and significance of songs, dance and exaggerations.

Stereotyping: Sex and Gender

The adaptation process of this film shelters traditional Indian codes of representing sexual issues. In the novel *Five Point Someone* Hari and Neha involve in physical love making in absence of Neha's father within Neha's house (Bhagat, 2004, p.169). The film not only denies this part of the story but also makes much fuss about a simple kiss between Rancho and Piya. We find genius Rancho finding it difficult to imagine a kiss between him and Neha. In another scene, when drunk Piya shows much interest for a kiss, Rancho maintains abstinence. The kiss finally occurs in the very last scene of the film, when both of them acknowledge their love for each other, and also ensures that both of them are still unmarried and not in love with anyone else. So the kiss occurs with a confirmation that the couple will get married soon.

It is understandable that commercial Indian films to become popular (successful) often comply with social values and traditional mindsets so that they can easily be appreciated by the mass people. The established values of Indian society accept sexual relationship only between a traditionally married husband and wife. Pre-marital sexual relationship is often considered as 'sin' and a sign of moral degradation. Even in the novel, after having sex, Neha guiltily asks Hari whether she is a bad girl now. (Bhagat, 2004, p.169). Of course, she was seeking redemption from her guilty conscience through consoling words from Hari. Central protagonists getting engaged in a pre-marital sexual relationship possess a great chance of mass disapproval.

M. Madhava Prasad (1998) in his seminal book *Ideology of Hindi Films* describes why showing any kiss is unofficially banned in Indian cinema whereas much more sexually erotic scenes are shown in the song and dance sequences. Prasad relates the kiss scene as an endorsement of people's private life whereas the modern Indian state, a development from pre-capitalist feudal society, still privileges familial values to private individual values. Prasad brings links among patriarchy, tradition and contemporary capitalist ideology which together still prefer celebration of 'family' and traditional values and prefer to deny the 'private' space as something 'nonexistent'. The fear is that showing innocent private moments like a kiss scene may encourage and endorse individualism to an extent that it may threaten the long established ties among traditional elites and new corporate hierarchy. Hence though the ban on showing kiss on screen was based on an 'unwritten rule', it was maintained more or less up to the 1980s. During the 1990s, India entered into the free market economy and in 1998 the Bombay film industry was granted the right to finance its films through foreign funding, bank loans and commercial investments. During this era the unwritten law was slowly transgressed. While the prohibition of kissing on screen was at work, at the same time erotic displays of female bodies in song and dance and other sequences were allowed. These dual characteristics of Hindi films prove that the ban was not directly associated with Indian cultural values, and it proves that the ban wanted to ensure the supremacy of the public space over the private. (Prasad, 1998)

The film *3 Idiots* through this omission of the sexual relationship and through making much fuss about the kiss covertly serves the dominant ideologies stemming from its traditional values. Along with it, the inclusion of the kiss, though at the very last scene, also gives some space to the modern times and its corresponding ideological stands. In this regard a comparison can be

brought forward between the film *3 Idiots* and *Kai Po Che!* (Kapur & Kapoor, 2013). Here the latter film is an adaptation from Chetan Bhagan's another novel *3 Mistakes of My Life* (Bhagat, 2008). This novel also includes a premarital sexual relationship between two of its central characters, and the director of the film adapted it without any change. *Kai Po Che!* did not enjoy a huge box office success and this inclusion of sex relationship in the film may be one of the reasons behind its apparent failure in the box office.

The adaptation process also makes the story more harmonious with the 'stereotyped' gender roles. In the novel *3 Idiots*, Neha was much more independent whereas in the film she, as Piya, has been stereotyped. In the novel she is a fashion designing student and her relationship with Hari moves forward mainly through her initiatives. It is Hari who falls in love with Neha, and it is Neha who takes time to approve it. Hari plays there an obedient boyfriend's role. In the film the equation alters, and it is Piya who first falls in love, and it is Rancho who takes time to approve it. The relationship between Piya and Rancho is completely dominated by the wisdom of Rancho. She is depicted as a typical Bollywood heroine who can't decide on her own, rather as a kind of human being who initially shows much arrogance without any particular reason, and as soon as that arrogance is won over, she gives up totally and surrenders her intelligence. Rancho makes her see the silliness in Suhash's character and convinces her about it very quickly. She also gets fascinated seeing Rancho's philanthropic attitude and rebellious spirit. But she herself possesses nothing which may draw the attention of Rancho. Here, a particular scene can be described. Hearing the news of Raju's father's sudden illness, Rancho requests Piya to accompany him to Raju's house giving him ride on her scooter. Piya finally agrees. Given that it is Piya's scooter and Rancho asks for the ride, it should be Piya riding the scooter, and Rancho sitting behind and giving her directions. But in the next shot we find Rancho driving the scooter and Piya sitting behind him. Piya's sitting behind Rancho and letting him drive the scooter represent the characteristics of the love relationship that develops between them in future. Piya's feminine weakness and Rancho's male superiority again become clear in the scene where drunk Piya proposes Rancho and tries to kiss him. Rancho, being the moral guardian and supreme upholder of traditional values, rejects Piya. It is Rancho who teaches her what is good and bad, what she should do and should not. Though they have reached a kind of understanding regarding a love relationship, Rancho leaves her without any words, and few years later Piya still takes her social reputation at risk by running away from her marriage ceremony for Rancho. She even does not check whether Rancho

is still unmarried and waiting for her. Even in the last scene, it is Piya who initiates the kiss.

So Piya, like the heroine of most other popular Bollywood films, is innocent, emotional and is utterly incapable of doing any material calculation. In the Manichean world of Bollywood films where characters are either totally good or totally bad, Piya, being the female protagonist, obviously belongs to the totally good and innocent category. Her archetypes can be found in the character and story of Sita from the epic *the Ramayana*. Like Sita, she gets detached from Rancho and later gets united. Like Ravana, Suhash is about to marry her, and like the Hanuman, Rancho's friends enter the wedding ceremony to rescue her. Rosie Thomas (1985) identifies that in Indian cinema there is not only a conflict between good/morality and evil/decadence, here good and morality connotes to what is 'traditional' or 'Indian', and evil and decadence connotes to whatever 'Western' and 'non-traditional' (Thomas, 1985, p.126).

Though, in representing the female protagonist, traditional part wins, still some space is given to the modernity part as well. Her riding a scooter, rejecting Suhash's marriage proposal twice, stealing office keys from her father to help Raju (thus going against the authority) and finally slapping and kissing Rancho at the last scene give her character some modern edge and give the audience some modern thoughts to ponder.

Popular Hindi films' attempt to create the female protagonist with a mixture tradition and modernity is well known among the critics and researchers. Nikhat Kazmi writes about the appeal of the actress Madhuri Dixit as 'someone who articulates the ultimate (Indian) male fantasy by creating a female character who has miraculously resolved all kinds of contradictions into a homogenized whole. One that is smart and simple, sensuous and shy, aggressive and malleable, intelligent yet vulnerable' (as cited in Banaji, 2006, p15). In the adaptation process too, much effort was given to dice out Piya in the light of Madhuri Dixit from the relatively simpler and more rebellious character Neha.

Socio-religious Issues

3 Idiots' adaptation also complies with the socio-religious background of India. We see one of the central characters of the novel adopted as a 'Muslim' in the film, and the change of religion was not a direct requirement

of the plot. Hari, who narrates the entire novel, is a boy from a Hindu family **and in the novel** he falls in love with Neha, his professor's daughter. **In the film,** though the story is still narrated from this character's point of view, but **the character** was adapted in a different way. Hari becomes Farhan Qureshi, a **Muslim,** and instead of Neha (Piya), photography becomes his passion.

A study of the story of *3 Idiots* clearly shows that Hari's becoming Farhan is **not a direct** demand of the plot. That is, whatever was done by Farhan, could **also be done** by Hari, or any other Hindu characters. Farhan's being a **Muslim,** only added a Muslim interior, along with some Urdu influenced **dialects** in some scenes which probably brought some variation in the film's **appeal** as a spectacle.

Maidul Islam (2007) and Syed Ali Mujtaba (n.d.), in their separate works, **show that** after partition Bollywood films have slowly marginalized the **Muslims** in some minor, stereotyped characters. From the roles of Badshahs **and Nawabs** of refined aesthetic tastes in 1950s and 1960s, they became 'indolent Nawabs chewing betel nuts and splurging their money on the **naughty** girls in the films of 1970s' (Mujtaba, n.d.). They were also 'pushed to **the margin** in the three-hour time slot. They often acted as sidekicks of **central** characters and some stereotypical images were widely used to **represent** them. In late 1970s and 1980s Muslims were portrayed as **Mumbai's** underworld characters. Since 1980s Islam means Jihad, Muslim **means** terrorists. The long cherished rivalry between India and its neighbor **Pakistan** has often triggered to and interpreted as the idea that the Muslims **represent** the Pakistan and the crime world. From 1980s onwards critics find **very few** films where a Muslim character has played the central role'. Critic **Syed Ali Mujtaba** remarks, "If Bollywood movies are to be believed, all **Muslims** are anti national and their faith was an extremist ideology." He also **comments** on the stereotypical representation of Muslims in current **Bollywood** films. "According to Bollywood movies that are currently made, **Indian** Muslim doesn't go to office, they don't smile and their career graph **does not** follow the usual arch of human endeavor. Such factious images of **Muslims** inadvertently have started sounding real in the contemporary life" (Mujtaba, n.d.).

3 Idiots 'having a Muslim character who is 'normal' (goes to office, leads a **normal** life, not conspicuous in any way just for being a Muslim) appears to

be a positive sign. Farhan and his family members are represented with the dreams and worries common to every Indian family. Thus by being simple, the film denies the stereotyping of the Muslims, and hence resists the dominant ideology, based on tradition and Hinduism, in this regard. The next film made by *3 Idiots*' director Rajkumar Hirani directly deals with religious issues prevailing within India. But *3 Idiots* did not make a Muslim character its central protagonist or 'Hero'. Hence, Ryan remains a Hindu and was adopted as Rancho. Importance and weight of the character was increased by shifting the love relationship from Hari-Neha to Rancho-Piya. A Muslim boy flirting with a Hindu girl and playing the lead role would have become a too much challenge for the popular film audience. So Farhan, though a normal Indian Muslim, still works as a sidekick of the central protagonist.

Thus even in the representation of a Muslim character dominant ideologies come to a conflict in the form of tradition and modernity. Here *3 Idiots*, though tries to come out of the traditional representation, fails to entirely reject the dominant hegemony.

Here, too, a side comparison between the adaptation of *3 Idiots* and *Kai Po Che!* can be done. In *Kai Po Che!* the story revolves around a talented child cricketer Iqbal. There are also three friends who open a cricket academy and after watching the talent of Iqbal, the friends decide to nurture him for the future of India. The story takes a Hindu-Muslim political conflict, and the Hindu politicians are shown very rude in killing the innocent Muslims. While they try to kill the talented Iqbal, his coach, the central protagonist of the film, dies for him. In *kai Po Che!*, though the central protagonists are not Muslims, but it has a very strong Muslim character centering whom the plot revolves. The film represents a strong message against religious fundamentalism. It may also be considered as one of the reasons for its failure in the box office.

Form: Influence of the Epics

Essence of 'Bollywoodization' in the adaptation process is found in the attempt to make the story more akin to the content and form of two classical Indian epics, namely the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Many critics find this conscious or unconscious influence of classical epics on the basic structure of all Bollywood films. In the adaptation of *3 Idiots* similar tendencies can be found. In the novel Neha has both of her parents alive and she does not have any sibling. In the film, we find her mother dead long before, and she has an elder sister. The inclusion of the elder sister, who is

also shown pregnant, is a demand of the plot, and her pregnancy and her labor pain arising right at the climactic moment work as a useful subplot for the film. But the significance of showing no mother is not a direct demand of the plot. Then the question arises why this change was brought.

Sudhir Kakar in his psychoanalysis of Hindi films describes Hindi film as 'a collective fantasy, a group daydream – in contrast to the individualized fantasy incorporated in a work of literature,...' (Kakar, 1981, p.12). He notes that in depicting a father-daughter relationship Hindi films often make the mother absent or dead, and the daughter at her marriageable age. The relationship is 'very close', full of 'physical expression of affections' and there exists an atmosphere of 'shared fun and teasing between the two until the daughter falls in love with a man whom the father initially considers quite unsuitable. The mythological prototype here is Daksa: Daksa's great (and partly incestuous) attachment to his daughter Sati, and his opposition to Siva as a husband for her.' (Kakar, 1981, p. 20)

Kakar further describes this 'wish for an intimacy with the father' as a 'universal fantasy among women'. During puberty, it is customary that a father in an Indian family withdraws from any physical closeness with the daughter, and the daughter too, being torn between her girlhood and womanhood, feels insecure and 'may interpret the father's withdrawal as proof of her unattractiveness as the woman she is becoming.' Kakar continues, "The wished for father –daughter intimacy becomes a major fantasy in India because of the fact that in the Indian family situation the father's withdrawal from his daughter is quite precipitate and irrevocable once she attains puberty. Kakar concludes by describing Hindi movies as contemporary myths which temporarily heal the audiences who are often suffering from 'stresses arising out of Indian family relationship'. (Kakar, 1981, p.20)

In the adaptation process of the film *3 Idiots*, consciously or unconsciously, this collective fantasy played a vital role. Piya, in the film, though not overwhelmed in admiration of her father, still respects and cares for her. Considering the pain it may cause, she hides the proper reason of her brother's death from her father. Piya's father, Professor Viru Sahastrabudhhe, sets questions intentionally hard to ensure Raju's failure in an upcoming exam. His anger upon Raju generates mainly from his competition with Rancho. When Piya objects to his father's such behavior as 'not fair', the

father replies, with the dominant comic tone, “everything is fair in love and war, and this is World War-III.” So what for Piya is a love relationship, is a ‘war’ like environment for her father.

Thus minute changes too can give us important information about the ideological battle that goes on underneath the main story of a film. In *3 Idiots*, Piya’s not having a mother and her relationship with the father ensures the film’s compliance with collective fantasy of the society, and hence draws the weight towards ‘tradition’ part, in opposition of modernity, once again.

Considering the narrative structure too, the adaptation process is influenced by the classical epics. The narrative structure of the film is different from that of the novel. The novel represents a linear storytelling pattern, and with necessary information about characters’ past, *Five Point Someone* is mainly a story of three friends’ college days at IIT Delhi. But the film *3 Idiots* represents a complex plotting. The film moves between past and present; that is, through regular long flashbacks the story is moved forward. We find two stories going simultaneously: one about Hari, Rancho and Raju’s college life and the other about Hari, Raju and Piya’s journey in search of Rancho while discovering Rancho’s past in the process. The inclusion of new stories regarding Rancho’s past and present, and to do that, inclusion of many more characters and incidents (digressions) in the main plot need to be marked here.

3 Idiots’ story is adapted to span in two generations and it became a tale of many years showing ‘Rancho’ as a child, and ending him as a quite grown up man in his 30s. New stories regarding Rancho’s childhood and present have been added. In the novel, he is just a son of an affluent business couple, and being brought up in the boarding schools, he does not have much affinity to his parents. But we never enter into the family story of Ryan. In the film, Rancho is shown as a talented boy from a very poor family, and he is hired to study on behalf of a dull boy who belongs to a very rich family. Rancho promises to study with the name of the rich family boy, and to hand over the certificates upon completion of his graduation. He also must keep it as a secret and must not contact any of his college friends after graduation. Whereas the novel ends with the graduation of three friends, the story of the film continues up to some more years. Rancho keeps his promise and does not contact his friends on his own, but his friends get an accidental photo of him in Shimla and starts searching for him. Here we get a lost and found plot

pattern, and finally we see Rancho's future after graduation where he becomes a famous scientist and an inventor, Mr. Phungsuk Wangdu.

Rosie Thomas (1985) in her seminal essay on Hindi cinema talked about the 'essence of Indianisation' (p.121). According to some Bombay film-makers she interviewed, 'there is a definite skill to making films for the Indian audience, that this audience has specific needs and expectations, and that to compare Hindi films to those of the West, or of the Indian 'art' cinema, is irrelevant'(as cited in Thomas, 1985,p.121). The film-makers summarize three main areas where this 'Indianisation' takes place. They are:

- (1) The way the storyline is developed; (2) the crucial necessity for emotion' (Western films are often referred to as 'cold'); and (3) the skilful blending and integration of songs, dances, fights and other 'entertainment values' within the body of the film. (as cited in Thomas, 1985, p.121)

Thomas finds influence of oral tradition in the narrative structures of Hindi films. She identifies that not only 'a film is expected to be two-and-a-half to three hours long, but it is usual for the plot to span at least two generations, beginning with the main protagonists' births or childhoods and jumping twenty or so years (often in a single shot) to the action of the present.' Thomas identifies 'village tradition of epic narration' responsible for this (Thomas, 1985, p.123). Sabrina Ciolfi in her essay discusses this in more details. She brings reference from Sheila Nayar and says:

Sheila Nayar brings out the basic affinity between the structure typical of oral narration and that of popular Hindi cinema, thus accounting for the relative lack of organic form. As in the prolix oral narration, she adds, Bollywood films, too, are characterized by continual introduction into the main storyline of short digression, with brief scenes involving minor characters which may prove comic, sweetly sentimental or sad, but in any case not usually serving to take the plot forward. (Ciolfi, 2012, p.392)

The new stories added to the film *3 Idiots* not only make it a two generation plot, but also we find many other characters like Suhas, Chatur and Millimeter becoming vital here. In their journey to find Rancho, the friends

also go through many other incidents, 'short digressions', like facing the original Shamaldas Chanchad and compelling him to tell the truth about their friend Rancho. They also convince Piya to run away right from her wedding stage. Farhan fakes a heart attack, and ensures an emergency landing of his plane. Raju in his utter excitement to meet Rancho goes out without wearing pants in a comic scene. All these stories create the necessary 'short digressions' as expected in Indian epic and oral traditions, and these work together to bring out different emotions or rasas of sadness, comedy and others. Nayar concludes, "What counts for the audience is the emotions, and so not so much 'what' happens as 'how' it happens, with evident reference to the aesthetic theory of rasa (flavor) upon which classical Indian theatre is based." (as cited in Ciolfi, 2012,p.393)

It may be summarized that, by making the plot a story of many years, by showing two generations, by introducing many other characters and many other incidents through which many short digressions are created to bring out many different 'rasas' what this Hindi film probably attempts to become is an epic itself. Famous Bollywood screenplay writer Javed Akhter thus aptly remarks, "The difference between Hind and Western films is like that between an epic and a short story." (as cited in Thomas, 1985, p.123).

Ways of 'Bollywoodization': Songs, Dance & Exaggerations

Another significant way of 'Indianisation' is the inclusion of songs and dance sequences. S. Gopal and B. Sen trace back its origin as 'most likely inherited from classical theatre' where music, singing and dance were important parts (as cited in Ciolfi, 2012,p.389). But this songs and dance sequences also play an important role in the story development of any Hindi films as 'every stage of development is marked by a musical sequence' (as cited in Ciolfi, 2012, p.390). We find the song 'all is well' in the beginning part of the film where Rancho clarifies his philosophy and influences his friends to follow it. When Piya starts feeling attracted towards Rancho, that part is also marked by a romantic song. Again, Raju's suicide attempt and his recovery period in the hospital are organized around another song which boldly states a not giving up attitude. Not only these song sequences move the story forward, but they do it in a much better way than dialogues. S. Gopalan and B. Sen say, "The space they open up within the film makes room for the innermost, subjective aspects; it is a space apart, in which the characters can express their deepest feelings, precisely by dint of singing and dancing rather than doing so explicitly with dialogue." (as cited in Ciolfi, 2012, p.390). Hence the much

looked after emotions or 'rasas' are found in a better and deeper way through these song and dance sequences.

As part of the 'Bollywoodization' process of the story, two more aspects can be discussed. The characters are made stereotyped and fixed, and 'exaggerations' are done for heightened emotions.

In the adaptation process some significant changes were brought in the depiction of the character Ryan. In the novel, Ryan, the leader of the trio, is more of a talented and free spirited guy than a good student. Out of the three friends, academic performance wise he scores the lowest; in fact he is one of the lowest scorers in his class. Ryan was adapted as 'Rancho', and his talent and creativity was highly exaggerated to give this character a larger than life aura which suited the typical characteristics of a Bollywood hero. In the film, he holds the same revolutionary spirit of studying for the sake of excellence, not for success; but here he is able to come out as the always top scorer student of his batch. Outside class works, he is able to finish unresolved thesis project of a senior student, and in a climactic sequence super genius Rancho not only ensures electricity from car battery using his 'Virus Inverter', he also on the spur of the moment makes a suspensor machine out of a vacuum cleaner to ensure the safe delivery of Mona's child. It is not wonder that at the end of the film, audience come to know that he has 400 patents of different new discoveries and he is a highly searched for scientist through out the world though he works in Ladakh, in a children school, and no highly accomplished laboratory is shown there. Such exaggeration is definitely absent in the novel. In the novel, all the characters bear relatively closer affinity with everyday people, and their activities can be judged using a cause and effect rationale.

Along with exaggeration in characterization, we find exaggeration in visuals too. For example, hearing that there is a chance of meeting Rancho once again, Raju forgets to wear his trousers in his rush to reach the IIT rooftop in time. Again, to prove that Rancho is different from others, it is shown that instead of waiting in queue for the bathroom, Rancho completes his bath in the campus garden, half naked in front of his college teachers and other classmates. Another example of exaggeration becomes visible when Rancho takes Raju's father to a hospital on an emergency need. He not only takes him on a scooter in a sandwiched position between him and Piya, he also rides the

scooter inside the hospital building, way past the reception desk and stops only inside a general ward in front of a duty doctor.

In the Hindi films' context, 'exaggeration' is not only accepted but also appreciated. A 'hero' teaching lesson to a number of mighty, well-armed ruffians single handedly is a very common phenomenon. By critics, it is often said that the definition of realism varies from the norm of Western films in the context of Bollywood films. Kakar (1981) identifies the difference between two concepts of reality: one based on facts which can be demonstrated, and the other 'psychically' real which is 'all that is felt to be the actuality of one's inner life. (p.14). He compares Hindi films with fairy tales and sees similarity between them as both 'emphasize the central features of fantasy: the fulfilment of wishes, the humbling of competitors and the destruction of enemies'. (Kakar, 1981, p.13) Thus he finds it very natural that, like fairy tales, 'over-simplification of situations' and 'elimination of detail' are very common in Hindi films. Kakar finally concludes:

Hindi films may be unreal in a rational sense, but they are certainly not untrue. Their depiction of the external world may be flawed, their relevance to the external life of the viewer remote, yet as we shall see, the Hindi film demonstrates a confident and sure-footed grasp of the topography of desire and its vicissitudes. (Kakar, 1981, p.14)

In the film, Rancho as a character never changes. He remains what he was from the very beginning. He does many charismatic deeds, but he himself remains unchanged. He is never confused, always cool headed, and never does anything self-contradictory. He just keeps doing his own works. From his first appearance in the screen, he is smart, genius and rebellious. He matches exactly with Kakar's description of 'characters of popular films' who are 'always typical, never unique, and without the unnerving complexity of real people.' (Kakar, 1981, p.13). But Rancho's all good characteristics and the 'exaggeration' regarding him can also be questioned. He is modern enough to raise question about the purpose of education, and free from traditional values to steal exam questions for his friend. But he also adheres to what is apparently 'essential' to maintain an 'Indian' identity. He maintains physical distance with Piya from a puritanical faith about chastity. Though he knows that his sponsors may use his certificates in unfair ways, he, in obedience of his promise, hands over the certificates to them, and stays away from his friends. After all, a good human being must keep his promises. We also don't find him raising questions about social inequalities and about

the rights of the original Chanchads to enjoy so much wealth. He does not leave India like his other classmates but does not hesitate to sell his patents to American companies. In the end of the film, we find him among the rich though apparently he leads a very simple life. In short, Rancho's revolutionary spirit is confined in his thinking regarding the education system. About other socio-economic issues of the society, and in his personal world, he very much follows what is generally prescribed by the traditional mindsets.

Ashis Nandy describes this phenomenon of over-simplified and typed characters from a different perspective. Viewing Hindi films as the representative of urban lower middle class people or slum dwellers, Ashis Nandy finds Hindi films obliged to serve 'everything for everyone' (Nandy, 1991,p.89). Hence they must consciously avoid any kind of identification with any particular historical character or time. Hindi films must maintain a 'culture-free appeal of the heroes and heroines' to maintain its worldwide acceptance and popularity. (Nandy, 1981, p.92). Nandy while describing the Bollywood films as 'a spectacle, not an artistic endeavor' also says, "In a spectacle, black is black and white is white- emotionally, motivationally and morally; all shades of grey must be scrupulously avoided. Not because greys do not exist in the world but because they detract from the logic and charm of a spectacle." (Nandy, 1981, p.89).

Nandy also explains 'exaggeration' by saying, "A spectacle has to be an overstatement". Tracing its history as product of traditional dramatic form like 'Jatra', Nandy finds 'overstatement – and melodrama - ...a crucial stylization in the Bombay film'. He says: "No one takes the content of such stylization seriously, except the arty film critic; it is the form of overstatement which is important. The popular film tries to be convincing as a spectacle by exaggeration. It does not even try to be a direct reflection of everyday reality."(Nandy, 1981, p.90)

Conclusion

A very common way to analyze any Bollywood film is to see it as a negotiation between tradition and modernity. Whereas the films, in accordance with its audiences' fantasy, try to maintain strong ties with its traditional values often represented by patriarchal and pre-capitalist feudal mindsets, they also try to bridge gaps with the changes caused by the changes

in socio-economic realm. Thus the films seek synthesis between tradition and modernity. In *3 Idiots* too, we find Piya as both traditional and modern, just in the same way Rancho as rebellious yet conservative. Whereas the representations of the female gender, sexuality, Muslim issues are mainly traditional, they do possess some rendition in the light of modern times. They are not directly rebellious against tradition but they are thought provoking and sweetly influential. In narrative structures too, underneath the apparent modern surface, we find the same traditional structures working full-fledged.

The changes made during the adaptation process and the consequent success of the film *3 Idiots* may help us to understand the workings of Bollywood - one of the leading culture industries of contemporary world. It helps us to see the overt and covert battles of ideologies at the levels of both content and form. To be successful a film must not get involved in any severe clash with the existing traditional values, and still it must talk about something new, and let people dream about a new age. It must represent a 'synthesis' between tradition and modernity. This search of a synthesis or a balance is no doubt a very interesting site to explore. The successfully synthesized films may enjoy a box office hit, and the audience may receive their due share of entertainment, but whether any significant change in the social structures is brought by such endeavors or whether the speed of that change (if any) is satisfactory remains as issues of much, and to a great extent subjective, debate.

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