

From Page to Screen: The Psychological Impact of Violence in Literature and Film

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ABSTRACT

The present research study explores how violence is portrayed in literature and film, and the psychological impact it can have on audiences, with a particular focus on the works of Indian author Chetan Bhagat. By analysing his novels with their film adaptations, the study looks at how stories of violence are told, how they change when moving from page to screen, and how these narratives shape the way people think and feel.

The study analyses the text *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* and its movie adaptation *Kai Po Che!* analysing how each version presents violence and the emotional and psychological responses they arouse. Through the comparison, the research uncovers the coated and often complex role violence plays in storytelling, shedding light on how such narratives influence our understanding of human behaviour. Further, the study emphasises the need to engage critically with violent stories, both in books and films, to grasp the deeper psychological and social memories..

Keywords: Violence, Literature, Film Adaptation, Psychological Impact, Narrative Analysis, etc.

Introduction:

Violence in literature and film is not just a sensational element; it serves as a critical lens through which audiences can explore the darker aspects of human nature. The study also explores the psychological impact of violence in Chetan Bhagat's selected literary texts and their film adaptations, focusing on how these shape audience perceptions and emotional responses. By analysing the transition from page to screen, the study tries to uncover the complexities of violent representations and their implications for understanding human behavior.

The 3 Mistakes of My Life by Chetan Bhagat is a modern Indian book that combines themes of religion, business, cricket, and—most importantly—violence. The story explores how violence, both physical and psychological, shapes the lives and minds of its characters and is set against the backdrop of actual natural disasters and communal riots. With references to particular scenes, the analysis looks at the psychological effects of violence as it is portrayed in the book and speculates on how these scenes might be heightened or changed in movie adaptations.

Here, Chetan Bhagat expertly weaves together themes of ambition, friendship, and the complex socio-political backdrop of India, particularly during the raging period of the Gujarat riots. Throughout the text, episodes of violence interrupt the storyline, most notably the Godhra train burning, which acts as a turning point, triggering widespread chaos and fear. The protagonist, Govind Patel, is deeply affected by these events. Reflecting on the tragedy, he remarks,

I realized that life is not just about dreams; it is also about the harsh realities that can shatter them. (Bhagat 145)

This statement captures the emotional and psychological struggles the characters endure as they find themselves caught between personal aspirations and the grim realities of a world marked by violence and division.

The most harrowing moments are rooted in the depiction of communal riots, which serve as a catalyst for the characters' psychological unraveling. The violence is not only physical but also deeply emotional, leaving lasting scars. For example, Govind witnesses the aftermath of an earthquake, describing the devastation with visceral detail:

I saw the devastation en-route. The new city areas like Satellite suffered heavy damage. Almost every building had their windows broken. Those buildings that were under construction had crumbled to rubble... Only that the six stories that were intact a day ago had now turned into a concrete heap. I could not concentrate. I felt an intense thirst. I looked for water, but I only saw rubble, rubble and more rubble. My stomach hurts. I grabbed it with my left hand and sat on a broken bench to keep my consciousness. (Bhagat 177)

This passage not only describes physical destruction but also Govind's psychological disorientation and disturbance. The violence intensifies during the riots, where the mob mentality and loss of individual morality are starkly portrayed:

Angry-Hindu chants... I saw three balls of flame across the pools. The nearest flame came from a building fifty yards away. A crowd of people stood outside. They threw stones on the burning building. I couldn't see well, but could hear the screams of the people inside the pool. The screams mixed with celebratory chants... A burning man ran across the road. The Hindu mob chased him. He stumbled on a stone and fell, around twenty yards away from us. The mob crowded over him. Two minutes later, the crowd moved away while the man lay still. I had witnessed someone's death for the first time in my life. My hands, face, neck, legs..." (Bhagat 339)

Here, the psychological impact is immediate and overwhelming, as Govind is "stunned" by the brutality and finality of death.

Personal and Interpersonal Violence

The violence is not only external but also internalized, manifesting as guilt, anger, and trauma. After the earthquake, Govind's emotional turmoil is palpable:

"The sight of blood made me vomit... Unrelated images of the day my dad left us flashed in my head... I think the brain has a special box where it keeps crappy memories. It stays shut, but every time a new entry has to be added, it opens and you can look at what is inside. I felt anger at my dad, totally misplaced as I should have felt anger at the earthquake. Or at myself, for betting so much money. Anger for making the first big mistake of my life. My body trembled with violent intensity" (Bhagat 178) (Bhagat, 2012, p. 178).

This passage illustrates how external violence triggers internal psychological conflict, linking past trauma with present suffering.

Mob Violence and Moral Dilemmas:

The climax of the text is marked by a direct conflict with mob violence, where the characters are forced to make life-and-death decisions:

I want the boy. I want that Muslim boy,' Mama said. 'What?' Ish said. 'Eye for an eye. I'll slaughter him right here. Then I will cry for my son. Get the fucking boy,' Mama said and thumped Ish's chest... 'They have madness in their eyes, they won't talk,' Omi said. 'We could try and escape. Or fight them,' Ish said. 'You want to fight forty people who are under a spell to murder?' I said. (Bhagat 344-345)

The psychological impact here is twofold: the terror of impending violence and the moral ambiguity of the choices the characters must make.

Psychological Aftermath:

The aftermath of violence is depicted through persistent guilt, trauma, and broken relationships:

Omi's parents... I can't tell you how ... destroyed they were. For weeks, the temple had visitors from the neighbourhood and the only prayers were for Omi, Dhiraj and Mama. At the funerals, Omi's father cried as five thousand people descended from all over Ahmedabad. Omi's mother became ill after not eating for a week. She had to be in the hospital for a month!... The guilt ... of letting Omi die, of my part in Mama's death, of celebrating Mama's death. But she knew nothing of my nightmares and I had to make a living anyway" (Bhagat 384-385)

Here, Govind's "nightmares" and inability to move on from the violence reflect the deep psychological scars left by these events.

Film Adaptation: *Kai Po Che!*

The film adaptation *Kai Po Che!* directed by Abhishek Kapoor, brings the psychological impact of violence on life through its powerful visual storytelling. From the very first scene, the film immerses viewers in the harsh reality of the communal riots, which serve as the backdrop for the characters' personal and emotional struggles. Through striking cinematography, the chaos, fear, and uncertainty of the times are vividly portrayed, allowing the audience to feel the tension that grips both the setting and the characters.

A defining moment in the film occurs when Omi, one of the central characters, faces the escalating violence head-on. In a moment of raw realization, he declares, "*We are not just spectators; we are part of this madness*" (Kapoor). His words reflect not only the psychological toll of witnessing such brutality but also the deep moral conflicts individuals face when caught in the middle of societal upheaval.

These violent scenes are frequently heightened visually in movie adaptations *Kai Po Che!* For instance, the communal riots are portrayed with truthful realism, drawing the viewer into the chaos and terror through the

use of color, sound, and camera movement. As a result, the trauma is more immediate and communal since viewers not only hear the psychological impact but also feel it viscerally.

Riots in Communities and Their Effects:

The communal riots act as a crucial background that influences the lives of the characters in both the book and the movie. The violence serves as an agent for character growth and psychological conflict rather than just being a plot device. The Godhra train burning at the beginning of the movie is a crucial scene that sets off the violence that follows. The responses of characters to this violence show their moral quandaries and inner conflicts. Bittu Mama, Omi's uncle, represents the violent Hindutva ideology in the film and exhorts Omi to exact the revenge for the alleged wrongs done to Hindus. In one scene, Bittu Mama states:

We won't allow them to get away with this. They must pay for their actions! (Kapoor).

This conversation perfectly captures the recurring cycle of brutality and revenge, showing how interpersonal conflicts can turn into terrible acts of violence.

The characters are deeply affected psychologically by violence, especially Omi, who struggles with loss and guilt. The tragic passing of his friend Ishaan, whom Omi unintentionally kills during a tumultuous altercation with a mob, haunts him after the riots. In a moving scene where he considers his behavior, Omi expresses his emotional turmoil:

I didn't want this." I didn't want to join this crazy group. All I wanted to do was keep my family safe (Kapoor).

This instance shows Omi's internal struggle as he struggles with his moral obligations and his loyalty of family. Guilt and regret are symptoms of psychological suffering that show how violence affects people for a long time.

Character Development and Psychological Complexity:

Both *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* and its film adaptation, *Kai Po Che!* use violence not just as a plot device but as a lens to explore deeper psychological themes. In Bhagat's novel, the inner conflicts faced by the characters reveal how societal expectations and personal ambitions can become sources of destruction. A clear example of this is Govind's determination to open a sports shop, a dream that quickly unravels when the mall is destroyed by an earthquake — an incident that marks the first of his three life-altering mistakes (Bhagat 28). This moment serves as a turning point, illustrating how even well-intentioned aspirations can be crushed by forces beyond one's control.

In *Kai Po Che!* The film builds on this psychological depth through its visual storytelling. The emotional impact of Omi's character arc is particularly striking. His desperate attempt to shield his friend Ali from a violent mob during the riots becomes a powerful symbol of sacrifice and moral complexity. The raw, unfiltered depiction of this scene captures the difficult choices the characters face, blurring the lines between right and wrong. Interestingly, the film omits certain subplots from the novel — such as the framing device involving a suicide note — allowing for a more focused and intimate portrayal of the characters' emotional struggles (Jabberwock: *Thoughts on Kai Po Che! as an Adaptation*, n.d.).

The shift from page to screen adds a new layer of emotional intensity to the story, as visual storytelling can stir reactions that written words may only hint at. Both the novel and the film use the communal riots as a pivotal backdrop, shaping not only the characters' circumstances but also their internal struggles. However, the film's depiction of violence feels far more immediate and immersive, drawing the audience into the fear and confusion experienced by the characters themselves.

The filmmakers' choice to omit certain aspects of the novel — such as the framing device involving a suicide note — results in a more focused, streamlined narrative. This creative decision places greater emphasis on the emotional and psychological consequences of violence, allowing viewers to engage more deeply with the characters' moral dilemmas and emotional turmoil (Jabberwock: *Thoughts on Kai Po Che! as an Adaptation*, n.d.).

Conclusion:

Thus, to conclude, the psychological effects of violence in Chetan Bhagat's selected works and its film adaptations are quite significant, influencing how audiences perceive and emotionally react to these stories in intricate ways. By analysing *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* and *Kai Po Che!*, the study highlights how violent narratives can act as vital mirrors reflecting human nature and social challenges. Engaging with these texts encourages audiences to face the more troubling sides of humanity, leading to a comfortable understanding of the psychological impacts of violence. As literature and film continue to change, the study of violence remains an essential topic, sparking ongoing conversations about its influence on cultural stories and individual minds.

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