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## Chanakya: From novels to big screen

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The exploits of Chanakya, the master strategist of ancient India, can soon be seen on the big screen.

UTV Motion Pictures has acquired the rights to novelist Ashwin Sanghi's book *Chanakya's Chant*, a fast-paced story based on politics in two radically different eras.

The book, published by Westland in January, narrates two parallel political tales - Chanakya's puranic Bharat 2300 years ago and post-independence contemporary India.

While the ancient story is largely historical, based upon Chanakya's rise to power and the clever tactics applied by him towards installing Chandragupta Maurya on the throne, the modern story is mostly fictional and tells the tale of Kanpur's Pandit Gangasagar Mishra who draws inspiration from Chanakya and employs his strategies in a modern context to get his protegee Chandini Gupta appointed to the highest office in India.

"Chanakya's Chant' has huge scope for a film. It has a cinematic story and great role for actors," says UTV Motion Pictures CEO Siddharth Roy Kapur.

"Lot of filmmakers have shown interest in the project. We are right now figuring out who should write the screenplay. Once that takes place, other things like choice of actors and music will follow," Kapur told PTI.

He hopes that *Chanakya's Chant* has the ingredients of the next big political drama after *Raajneeti*.

Sanghi is more than delighted.

"UTV is known to have produced differential cinema across genres, and I am confident that they will do complete justice to the plot of the book. This novel combines history and politics and given that they've been involved in both *Jodhaa Akbar* as well as 'Raajneeti', I think they are ideally suited for *Chanakya's Chant*, the author says.

He sees his book as delicately balancing the ancient and the modern.

"The transitions between the historical track and the contemporary track are crucial. I would hope that the fundamental DNA of the book is maintained and that the essential wit and charm of the story is preserved. I am extremely excited about this project and eagerly waiting to see the book manifest into a movie.

"The movie will reach a much wider audience apart from the people who loved the book," says Sanghi, whose debut work *The Rozabal Line*, a thriller swirling between continents and centuries, was compared to *The Da Vinci Code* by critics.

According to Sanghi, UTV is contemplating one actor who could play both roles of Chanakya and Gangasagar Mishra, and it will definitely be someone significant in the industry.

"Each of these two characters is hugely difficult to pull off thus it would need to be someone of incredible capabilities to carry off both roles."

Sanghi chose Chanakya because "so little is actually known about him." According to him, the name Chanakya is not mentioned even once in the Arthashastra.

While watching all the 47 episodes of the famous TV series on Chanakya, directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi in the nineties, Sanghi was struck by the many of the political strategies described that could easily be adopted in modern-day political drama.

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