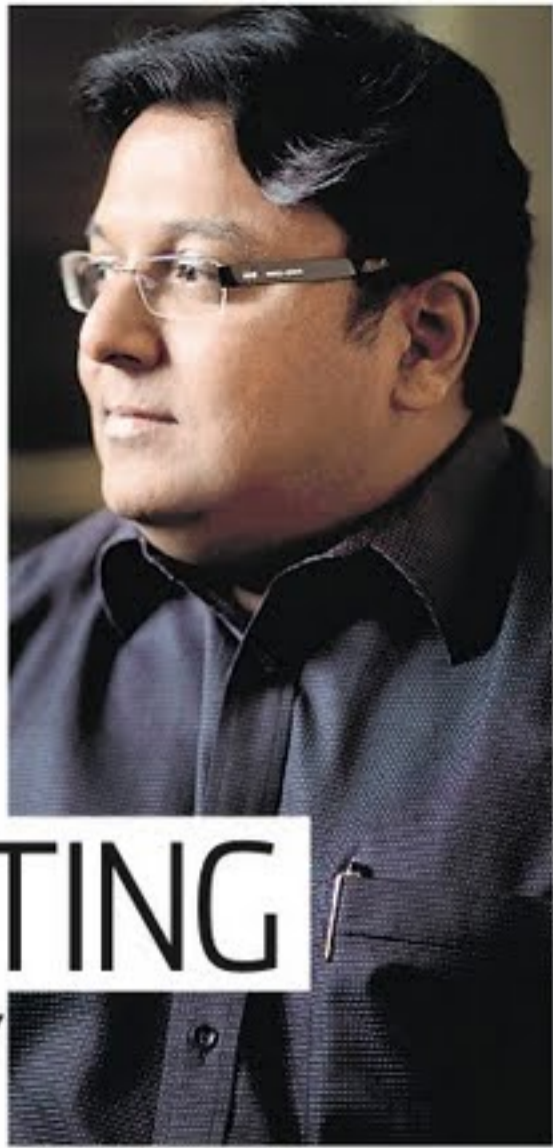


# 'I THINK GREY IS THE MOST INTERESTING COLOUR'



UTV Motion Pictures recently announced that it has bought the rights to best-selling historical thriller, *Chanakya's Chant*. SOWMYA RAJARAM speaks to author Ashwin Sanghi on why he believes an evolving Bollywood will translate his grey characters to celluloid quite easily

**Did you, while writing the novel, imagine that it would lend itself to a film?**

I had not written *Chanakya's Chant* with a film in mind but my very first reader, my editor, told me that the story was visual and that she could imagine each scene playing out.

**The book moves quickly from one location and time span to another. How do you see that communicated in the film?**

I believe geographical transitions will be easier to handle than time transitions. The story moves along two parallel tracks — the present day and 2,300 years ago. The only link is a single Sanskrit chant. If this element is handled with finesse, the rest will fall in place effortlessly.

**Are you at all involved with the adaptation?**

A screenplay is a very different animal to a novel. As a novelist, I can jump 2,300 years, leap across thousands of miles and also describe what is going on inside a character's head. A screenplay writer needs to work with several limitations. He needs to convey the story within a limited number of hours and within a specified budget. That's not my cup of tea. But I do know that UTV is considering the possibility of having the same actor play the role of Chanakya as well as Gangasagar Mishra to reinforce the connectivity between the past and the present.

**History and political events have been fictionalised in the novel. Do you anticipate a further dilution of facts?**

History is nothing but a commonly

accepted view of ancient events, those events usually having been narrated by the victor. So how much should we view history as fact? Tulsidas rewrote the Valmiki Ramayana and succeeded in popularising it, but the story was substantially different. I'm sure our ancestors viewed the Puranas as ancient history even though we don't see it as such today. Were our ancestors wrong, or are we wrong? There is a very fine line between fact and fiction and that has always been the case.

**Your characters are grey. Hindi cinema, however, hasn't had a great track record there. Many are simply black or white.**

You are right. I believe that Hindi cinema is in a state of flux. We are seeing stories that are new and innovative also becoming commercially successful. In the right hands, there should be no difficulty in managing the portrayal of shades of grey. Grey is often called a dull or boring colour. I have always considered it the most interesting!

**Any apprehensions?**

No. The UTV team and I share a great rapport. Mutual confidence and trust is key in producing a quality product. I'm quite sure they will do justice to the book.

**Any last thoughts?**

Nathaniel Hawthorne famously said, easy reading is usually damn hard writing. I know how tough it is to write a page-turner, a book that you don't want to put down even at 2 am. I guess the same rule applies to movie making too.

sowmya.rajaram@mid-day.com

