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From memoir to movie: Sanjaya Baru's accidental prime minister

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Abstract

Sanjaya Baru's *Memoir the Accidental Prime Minister: Making & Unmaking of Manamohan Singh* erupted controversies on the eve of 2014- general election. The writer's four years tenure in the PMO has been portrayed sketching the political activities in the top office of the country. After its popularity, script carved out for a movie which was also embroiled into controversies till its release. The paper attempts to find out how Baru adds fiction to spice up his memoir and how the memoir has been scripted to hit the box office.

Keywords: Memoir, movie, journalism, PMO, politics, coal gate, media advisor

Introductions

Sanjaya Baru's journalistic investigation in PMO in the four years of his service career is recorded here though some fiction may be there as the critics claim. The journalists mainly write after a lot of investigations and experiences but some journalists who sprang to fame overnight are very controversial like Sanjaya Baru who entangled into controversy writing the reality behind PMO politics. The most powerful office of the contrary headed by the Prime Minister is the centre of politics because all the political decision is taken here by the officials of the PMO. Other journalists who write about politics and politicians are not that much controversial like Baru though he has not scandalized the Prime Minister or blamed him for the mega corruptions which surfaced in the UPA-I and UPA-II government headed by the Dr. Manmohan Singh.

Cleverly Baru buries the corruptions part of the UPA government which the film unearthed. The aim of Baru is to earn applause as a writer and the objectives of the movie is business and profit. The Manmohan Singh government had earned bad reputations for corruption. The Telecommunication minister, P. Raja was in the jail for the 2G spectrum license by the intervention of the apex court of the country. The CAG Binod Roy prepared the coffin the Manmohan Singh Government by submitting the audit report of hundred million rupees coal gate scam. Binod Roy, in his autobiography, *Not Just an Accountant*, has vividly analyzed it.

The court severely criticized Kapil Sibal, the senior Congress leader and the Cabinet Minister of Singh's government, for defending the government in the coal gate scam in a press release. These controversies and corruptions had already defamed the UPA-II government. Meanwhile Baru's memoir was the bolt from blue for the central government. *The Accidental Prime Minister: Making and Unmaking Manmohan Singh* (2014) immediately sprang into fame as there a lot spade work of controversy. The Indian political sky was clouded in the corruption of the Singh's government so the Baru's memoir aggravated the controversy bringing a new twist of evidence.

The media highlighted the all the issues of corruption. Again the hunger strike of Anna Hazare against corruption of the UPA government brought the government into turmoil. *The Accidental Prime Mister* was the documentary evidence against all the media allegation of corruption. Actually it was a perception that *The Accidental Prime Minister* is the evidence against the corruption of the UPA government actually the text was simple a memoir of Baru in the PMO as the media advisor.

The media advisor is an ornamental post in the PMO as he has little role to advise the Prime Minister in connection with the media link. The Prime Ministers rarely consult with the media advisor regarding any press meeting or airing any bites. When the Prime Minister addresses the media, the PMO calls certain selective journalists to the press conference.

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The PMO never consult with the media advisor whom to invite or whom to reject. The political parties run the government mostly decide what the PM would address regarding any policy and political decisions.

Baru deals with most of the economic policies of the Manmohan Singh government in his memoir which is termed as the controversial by the media. But these complex policies and speeches Dr. Singh are deleted in the script to relax the audience from the complexities of economics which is the very contrary to arts. Economics is a science to focus on the growth and development of country and individual. When a movie is made out of an economy text, it is very much complex to carve out a script with the dialogues suit to the situation and the context. Most of the scenes in the movie *The Accidental Prime Minister* are very artistic and irrelevant with the subject of economy though the text of Baru explicitly dealt with.

The political memoir was a hot cake of the time because it narrates interaction of the writer with a lot of politicians who were directly connected to the PMO. Baru does not say anything directly against the prime minister but creates a situation where the PM is painted like a puppet. It is very much surprising that Baru has failed to reveal any secrecy which nation wanted to know. Who, actually, twisted the arms of Dr. Singh to singe the Talbira coal gate file which he once refused to do so. When the coal gate corruption surfaced Dr. Singh was protected by getting the coal secretary a scapegoat. The secretary who mentioned the legal process of floating tender in the file in detail had changed the procedures. It indicates that some has pressurized the PMO for the Talbira mines. Baru, who was in the PMO, knew detail but he was silent over the matter in his memoir.

His four years tenure in the PMO was not controversial. He silently was in the office perhaps without any work which the elder daughter of Dr. Singh aired to the media after the publication of the book.

Most of the text and the contexts are deleted in the script. The movie was made for certain propaganda. So the UPA government pressurized the censor board to certify the film to be released which made the movie controversial and it gained advertisement. The censor board's decision really popularized *The Accidental Prime Minister*.

The term accidental in the context of selecting the prime minister was not really accidental as Baru says. In case Dr. Singh would not be the PM any other senior Congress leaders would be the PM. Sonia selected Dr. Singh for his popularity and acceptability which proves her maturity handling the situation arose out of chaos. The NCP led by Sarad Power opposed Sonia Gandhi for the post of PM for her foreign origin. The coalition partners were also not happy for Sonia's to ascend the top office of the country.

Again the opposition chalked out plans to target Sonia Gandhi boycotting her in the parliament which would be very embarrassing for her. Sonia could not handle the pressure of the opposition both inside and outside of the parliament so she was advised to step down crowning Dr. Singh. Such a great sacrifice soared the popularity of Sonia Gandhi bring her a status of the statesman like Vajpayee.

The movie as it is motivated, as alleged by the Congress, did not narrate the narrative created after Sonia's denial for the top post. Baru is also very much septic about the political turmoil arose out of Sonia's denial of becoming the PM. He

does not portray the narrative rather he watched the political scenario of the time in his own journalistic spectacles.

Some journalists also alleged that Baru goes against the breach of trust which he should not do as per the moral ground. But there are no legal restraints refraining him to unveil the inside drama in the PMO.

The two senior bureaucrats grappling with each others before the Prime Ministry on a certain policy matter is really humorous. It seems to be fictitious as claimed because the bureaucrats rarely meet to meet the Prime Minister unless they are asked to do so.

Again it seems to be fictitious that Dr. Singh's question about the history of bureaucracy's bravery even grappling with each before the Prime Minister. Baru also narrates the history of bureaucracy and their indisciplinary activities which the PM doubts.

In this context Baru satirizes the bureaucracy and its self righteous attitudes which find a place in the movie. Generally the bureaucracy and journalism are very much antagonistic to each others because journalism unveils what bureaucracy veils. The ideology of journalism is not to reveal the sources of the news which they serve because it may bring disaster to the sources. Taking such advantage the writer narrates many things without mentioning the sources of this information.

When nonfiction contains certain fiction it becomes controversial. The controversial part may have proof or may not have but the controversy helps advertising the text which, sometimes, the writer knowing does to jump into fame overnight. Baru's is an apt journalist who inherited the profession from his family. His father who was writing the scripts for Rajiv Gandhi was a popular man. His style of writing was natural and direct which is very much appealing. Baru rarely follows his father and his style of writing rather he adopted a very controversial approach to gain overnight popularity which he could achieve.

The script writer carved out the script to suit the audience and for profit. The language and words Dr. Singh used in his speech in the parliament, public meetings and addressing the press delivery used which Baru has skipped. The script writer went through all the speeches of Dr. Singh. He selected certain words which Dr. Singh deliberately used like "inculcate, growth, development, price rate, inflation and employment." All these words are mostly found in almost all his speech. Some journalist like A. K Dube says that Dr Singh himself edited his speech from the scripts and selected the words which preferred to use. His soft tone with simple words were very much ear appealing though his speech was not poetic like the speech of his processor Vajpayee and philosophical like P.V. Narasingha Rao. The minor characters which have major contribution in both the movie and in the text are portrayed with a mixture of fact and fiction. A layer of fiction is found to sketch almost all the characters to render an artistic touch which all the writers generally do in practice though they claim that everything is fact. But a layer fiction is essential to sketch even a live real character. Literature may not be appealing or masterpieces without fiction. The fiction which the writer perceived may be fact because he often applies his third sense to know the fact behind the characters. Sometimes the writers knowingly overlook the fact adding fiction while sketching the characters he likes.

Sanjaya Baru, for his economy background was linked with the department of Finance Department in 1991 through his journalistic father who served Congress party till his last breathing. The nation was in a state of turmoil and financially crippled due to the shortage of foreign reserve. The mortgage of tonnes of gold in foreign countries for dollars lowered the confidence of the investors a result the condition turned worst. In that juncture economic news was the first preference for the readers who closely watched the development of the economic policy matters how the new finance minister was handling the situation who served the World Bank for years.

All these contexts regarding the rise of Dr. Singh as an economist and bringing the nation to economic stability has been overlooked by the text and the movie. The situation demanded for an economist who could bring the nation out of crises. The nation reached its goals in two years flowing dollars into the domestic market after the abolition of the license raja for investments.

The radical structural changes in economic policies raised the confidence of the overseas investors as result the growth in industrial sector bloomed bringing employment and increasing the per capita income. These incidents of struggling scenario of Dr. Singh's carrier in the department of finance have been overlooked to belittle him. Only the negative sides and loopholes are raised in the films and the text for certain objectives which may be called the hidden agenda of the writer and the film makers.

When Dr. Singh was the Finance Minister he was taking decisions of his own as he gained the confidence of the Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. Narasimha Rao's success as the prime minister was largely attributed to Dr. Singh and effort to stabilize the economy of the country. Baru writes, "Rao's first choice was I.G. Patel, a former Secretary in the Ministry of Finance who has just returned to India after a stint as director of the London School of Economics. A critic of many Indira Gandhi's policies Patel had called for 'a bonfire of control' in an influential essay written in 1980." (17)

His maiden budget presented in the parliament in 1991 was severely criticized by the opposition and the media for asking the nation to wait for two years to bring back the economy into track. Dr. Singh was not a politician who could speak something to be understood something differently. His speech is often criticized by the opposition due to lack of political jargons. These things are there in the text but the movie is more out of the context to propagate some hidden agenda.

When the critics analyze the movie in the context of the text, a lot of differences are found. Exactly the text is not generally resembled the scripts. Even the great Indian epics are textually differing from the scripts in plot and structures. In epics characters are neither added nor changed unlike the fiction. The fiction is something new and unknown to the audiences for which the script writer and the producers have the enough space to handle it for their own profit but such thing they could not do in case of the great epics.

The minor known characters in the movie are famous political personal. They are sketched as they are. The problem for the UPA government was Mamata Banarjee. Her role was very much objectionable because she handled the railway department as if it belongs to the West Bengal only. Her decisions were often criticized by the opposition and media but she did not pay any hints of it. She knew the

weakness of the UPA government which ran by her support. In case she withdrew support from the government he it would topple. So the PM did not have any control over the coalition partners and their ministers who were directly controlled by their own party leaders.

Baru criticized the Gandhi family for controlling all the political power without any responsibility. All most all the important decisions were taken in the residence of Sonia Gandhi with the consultation of the senior Congress leaders like Pranaba Mukherjee, A. K Antony and others but for the consequences of the decision the concerned ministers were held responsible and turned scapegoat to save the party leaders. All these incidents are symbolically hinted through these needed detail elaboration for clarity.

Baru's question on the family politics is very controversial. Family politics only promotes immature leadership which is very dangerous for the country and democracy. The issue of family politics is highlighted in the movie through it is a minor portion of the text. The writer brings the scenario of family politics where the children of politicians were treated as the princess and prince.

Baru, as a journalist, he is very informative in analysis and factual in his description. When he analyses the economic scenario of India in the context of the world's economy it is very unique and innovative. The picture of India economy he draws in *The Accidental Prime Minister* is like *India 2020* written by APJ Abdul Kalam. The text of Kalam is informative only. He tries to show the readers how India is growing as an economic power by 2020. He is scientist but his perception regarding the growth and development of India could not be factual due to certain bottlenecks which his vision could not reach. But Baru is both an economist and a writer who knows well how the growth of India totally depends on the monsoon. The monsoon often plays hide and sick with agricultural growth either to boost or to sluggish the growth rate. So it not possible to draw an accurate picture of growth in Indian economy which Kalam did in his *India 2020*.

It is a fact that Baru praises his boss in such a way it belittles him. It is a literary technique to criticize through the cover of appreciation. It is not satire but they way the writer advocates in the favor of Dr. Singh it caught his figure dwarf. But in the first term of his office, Dr. Singh's achievements handling the nuclear issue confronting with the left partner popularized him as an unbent leader. The UPA voted back to power for his nuclear policy and dialogue with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.

Baru does not hint the really hidden agenda of the UPA partners which the movie discloses. The UPA government was unpopular for its appeasement policy for the Muslim votes which the majority of the Hindu voters did not appreciate. Again the main rightist party BJP launched the direct attack on the central government for being soft on the terrorist for the Muslim vote bank. The top BJP leaders directly attacked the Gandhi family having linked with Pakistan and China. The continuous terrorist attacks in the different parts of the country and the government's inability to handle it properly put the government in the troubles.

Baru overlooks the report of the Antony Committee which was formed to assess the party's debacle in 2014 general election. The Antony Committee clearly states after interacting with the grass root leaders from the different corner that the Muslim appeasement policy of UPA was the main reason of the defeat of the party. The policy makers

failed to read the pulse of the people and swayed away by the old ideology of appeasement for which Congress was to price a lot. Congress failed to even get the status of the opposition in the Lok Sabha.

Baru bargained for political berth as it was alleged by his critics. His memoir came out catastrophic for the doodling PM and the Congress head he government.

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