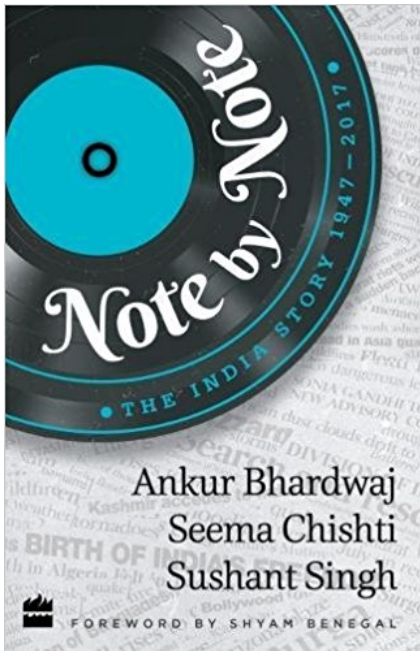


The history of independent India told through Bollywood songs

PRIYA KANUNGO • 16 September, 2018



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In Note by Note – The India Story 1947-2017, the authors weave an engaging narrative around history by picking one song from each year.

What happens when Bollywood music meets Indian history, and not one, but three Cupids work their charm? You get a book that nudges you to pick it up called *Note by Note – The India Story 1947-2017*.

Written by the journalist trio – Ankur Bhardwaj, Seema Chishti and Sushant Singh – it's also got a succinct foreword by celebrated filmmaker Shyam Benegal.

The book has a chapter dedicated to each year, starting from the year India became free. You get a stanza of the signature song of that year, the backstory to its creation, and national events that could be linked to it.

Time crunch or otherwise, the greatest felicity of this book lies in each chapter, averaging about five pages, being stand-alone. The fact that you don't have to connect earlier chapters with the one you pick makes it both interesting and easy to refer to.

To pick randomly:

If it's 1950, it's *Gore Gore O Banke Chore*. It's also when the Constitution was adopted and the Election Commission came into being.

If it's 1957, it's *Yeh Duniya Agar Mil Bhi Jaaye*. It's also when the Mundra scam dominated headlines and Life Insurance Corporation bought fraudulent stocks.

If it's 1975, it's *Tere Bina Zindagi*. It's also when Emergency was declared.

If it's 2014, it's *O Jugni Ho Pataakka Guddi O*. It's also when the BJP came to power at the Centre winning 282 seats, and Arvind Kejriwal resigned after just 49 days as Chief Minister.

While reading *Note by Note* you are sure to jog your memory, as it traces many long-forgotten, yet beautiful melodies all the way back to 1947. For most of us listening to a bunch of songs on a loop, this is a great way to reboot. You'll get a brand new playlist, and in the bargain, shore up on Indian history too.

You could argue the authors might have arbitrarily chosen a song-of-the-year. You could say their linking of certain lyrics to political change that year might be stretched at times. There can be no debate, however, that the subject of the book is unique. Told in a no-frills style, there isn't a dull moment in the narrative.

Read *Note by Note* for the many hued accounts of how composers, singers, producers, lyricists and actors came together to musically reflect a thought. Read it to see how well the authors connect the dots between society and song.

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